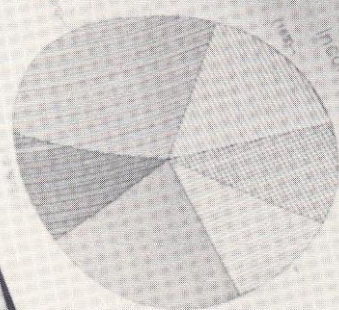


Community Television Review

Volume 9, No. 4, 1986




Trends In Access Development

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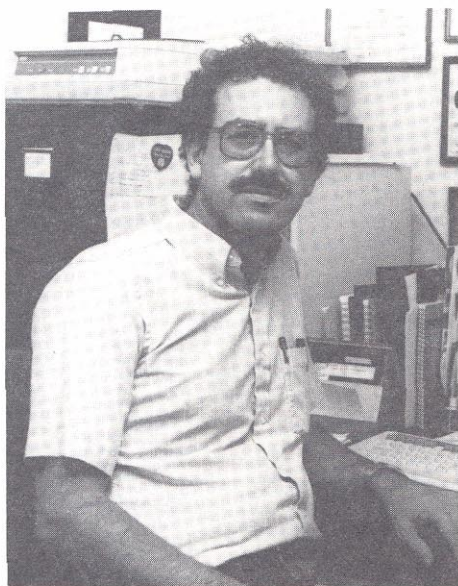
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Letter From The Managing Editor

By Dave Bloch



"Write a think piece about this aspect of local programming. Try not to do a single case study — instead, look at issues from a broad national perspective."

That was my request to the authors of the theme articles in this "Trends" issue of *CTR*. What came back on paper and floppy disk were some very thoughtful and thought-provoking works. The authors of these essays take widely differing views on some of the most fundamental issues in our field. They discuss the roles of money and advertising in local programming, and audience surveys, and management, and access' very reasons for existence.

As I entered these articles into the PC, I found some of my own ideas and beliefs about community programming being challenged. Sometimes, by the time I had finished entering the article, I was ques-

tioning those long-held beliefs. In other cases, I remained in solid disagreement.

You might also find yourself arguing against some of the opinions and conclusions expressed by our authors. If so, it's a very good time to clarify to yourself exactly *why* you feel as you do — you might some day have to defend that position, and being prepared never hurts!

The process of putting this issue of *CTR* together did solidify one feeling I have — that this publication is indeed a forum for different views of what local programming is about, as well as being a reliable source of information on public policy, production and training techniques, and management. As such, I hope it will continue to reflect the same kind of diversity seen every day on your local community channels.

PLUG

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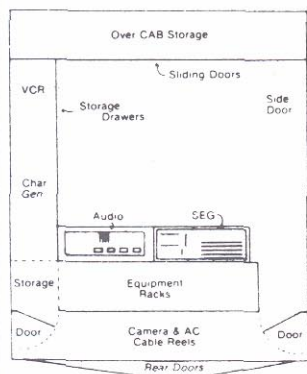
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Defining Public Access In The Eighties

By Margot Hardenbergh

After more than ten years, it is still difficult to define public access television: it defies a generic definition. For the producer it is a channel to be used on a first come, first-served basis, but that is not a full enough description. How does one view it? Who views it? What is the content? The goal of public access producers is to defy any definition, to create unexpected programming, to include people not normally seen on the screen—to provide an outlet for the community to communicate with itself.

For a doctoral dissertation, my study questioned if public access was fulfilling its promise of "offering alternative television"—that was as clear a definition as I could give. I interviewed the producers, viewed the content, surveyed the potential audience, and observed the activity of three public access channels in Connecticut.

The towns, Branford, Guilford and Madison, are very similar to each other yet each handles its public access channel differently. The three communities have populations of 10,000 to 20,000, and have almost identical media already available to them. They have similar demographics, and similar town government structures.

The towns were served by the same cable operator, Rollins Cablevision, at the time of the study. Rollins had supplied each community with a half-inch video cassette recorder, monitor, camera, tripod and batteries. The cable operator also made a studio and editing facilities available to each community.

At least 70 per cent of the homes in each community are cable homes, and a telephone survey indicated that at least half of the cable subscribers have watched the public access channel in their town. With all these similarities a close study of the way each community ran its channel revealed vast differences; differences in terms of who used the channel and how it was used.

The people who were involved with the channel, who started it up and who are still interested in using it, determine some of the differences. One man, as a volunteer coach for a sports team, taped the games so

that the players would be able to see their own games and any errors they had made. Another works with optical fibers and lasers, and wanted to see what was available in his own back yard. He feels that public access television is a most powerful influence, yet people don't know anything about it. As a technician he helps anyone produce any program they are interested in. Another person feels politically and morally motivated to entertain and educate, and produces interviews with musicians and artists. Another wanted to foster community dialogue and got a group of people together to produce a weekly news program.

Each public access channel reflected both its users' interests and its organizational setup. Some were more efficient than others at providing access to as many citizens as possible. But the differences most easily noticed were 1) the location of the public access channel modulator—the technological source of the channel—and 2) the activities of people involved with the channel.

Branford had the channel's modulator and the equipment stored in the emergency dispatcher's office at the fire headquarters. At first glance that appears to be a good idea because there is always someone there to run the programming and sign out the equipment. In fact, if Fire Chief Mullen had not been interested in community television programming, Branford would not have any public access channel. Chief Mullen first became involved so that he could provide training programs over cable television for the volunteer firefighters. He also used the channel to announce CPR courses, a publicity device so successful that it is now needed only occasionally.

When the cable operator made equipment available to each town-recognized access group, Chief Mullen offered to house the equipment because no one else was interested. That situation soon changed! The town government wanted all its public meetings taped and cablecast, the high schools wanted their sports on, and many others wanted to produce programs. The chief was concerned that the

equipment remain in working condition and thought most people did not appreciate the value of the equipment nor the time it takes to produce a program. It became very difficult for individuals to borrow the equipment, and programming of any political nature was denied time on the channel.

Branford's public access channel is now really run as the town's government access channel, carrying public meetings. Established groups can gain access to the channel time and the equipment if they have demonstrated technical knowledge. Church services are cablecast, the football and basketball games are carried, but any other programs are looked at by the Fire Chief to filter out any with a political bias or a for-profit nature.

As a contrast, **Guilford** has its modulator in a room in the public library. The group of citizens who run the channel has maintained an interest in remaining an organization separate from the town and has an open-door policy regarding equipment and channel usage. After instruction on the equipment, any individual gets a key to the equipment room in the library and is able to schedule his or her programming and equipment usage. That person is also responsible for cablecasting of the program. The only restrictions on the use of the equipment and the channel are the hours the library is open.

A founding member of Guilford Community Television, George Norton, compared public access to "letters to the editor; some are polished, some not, but they all have the flavor of the community." After ten years, the programming has become quite sophisticated technically. Everyone can identify their own strengths and work on the part of the programming that interests them. The open-door nature of the group allows it to reflect the population at large.

The telephone survey found that of the three towns, Guilford had the largest percentage of cable subscribers who had participated in the production of programming for the public access channel; 14 percent.

Guilford's programming on the public

access channel is a reflection of the changing interests of those involved. There have always been local sporting events cablecast. Years ago there were political programs including interviews with the First Selectman. Now there are no regularly scheduled political shows, but there are magazine shows that feature tours of historic homes or include cooking segments. There are special programs produced on a wide variety of subjects from peace to children's fairs.

The third channel, in **Madison**, was reactivated recently due to an interest shown by the chief elected official. First Selectman LaChance asked an active citizen to review its status, and after much work, Carolyn Stitt organized a group of citizens to supervise the channel. The town recently agreed to provide space, and funds for equipment.

The channel carries most of the town public meetings, including all-day public hearings with call-in questions. The group tapes sporting events and sells each tape to the team after cablecasting it. A group produces a weekly news magazine program about the town. There are a few programs produced on a one-time-only basis, but for the most part the programs are regularly scheduled series or cablecasts of events.

My research showed that each of the three channels represented some individual's personal definition of public access. These channels are also a part of the changing world of television. As there are more channels from which to choose, public access benefits if it is also allowed to change. The audience is there; people want to see their community at work and play; and they will get involved with the channel

if it is made accessible. There needs to be support from the cable operator. The modulator must be readily available and not placed in a location that scares people away. The equipment must be easy to use and readily available. But above all, the people involved must be interested in working with as many different people as possible. My study indicated that public access is no longer an experiment.

Dr. Margot Hardenbergh is an Assistant Professor at the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Her dissertation, submitted to New York University in 1985, is entitled "Promise versus Performance: A Case Study of Four Public Access Channels in Connecticut."

History Of Communication And Access

By Dirk Koning

Communication has been a cornerstone of human evolution. As individuals from various tribes were able to assemble symbols and sounds, they were able to share emotions and needs.

Communities grew around communication media. Cave walls sprouted bison images, stone chips flew from tablets and papyrus scrolls stored records of Scribes and Pharisees.

Communication leaders built cultures. Reading and writing skills were cherished and guarded and wielded for power. Alphabets and calendars separated regions and thought processes.

Movable type splattered across Europe. "Common" man assembled history and philosophy and spread printed thoughts and visions. Underground newspapers caused revolutions.

Governments clammered to control process, mechanics and content.

Words converted to airwaves flew across America.

Entrepreneurs invested in potential markets and the American government determined the airwaves were public and was entrusted to regulate spectrum space.

Fast waves carried sound.

Faster waves carried light: first from film and then "television."

A thousand words could be lost in one picture.

Capitalism sold public airwaves to the highest commercial bidders. Communities sat back and looked and listened.

Waves funneled through cables to homes out of range of airwaves started Cable Television.

Communities began to trade rights-of-way and exclusive franchises for space on the cable channels and money.

People began to adapt from print and a new literacy began to grow; visual literacy and communication. Well over one thousand Public, Educational and Governmental Access channels are being programmed across the country.

Communities are crowding into TV studios, not as an audience, but as producers.

Video production and projection is available through access to thousands of people.

The one-way funnel of TV from networks to households has become a two-way sieve.

Wires are criss-crossing America and TV messages are sent within communities to each other.

TV is a powerful communication tool. Classroom borders have stretched to envelop communities.

City Halls can wind throughout a town, making government more democratic with increased awareness and involvement.

Like computers, local TV communication is an evolving network of one-to-one and many.

Citizens have a right to cable channels for local communication.

We believe that a balance can be found between Cable Company Profits, City Franchise Fees and financial support for Public Access.

We believe communication is the next era of human advancement and because of that, citizen access to dominant communication media is essential and must be assured and supported.

Dirk Koning is Executive Director of GRTV in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Access Management Structures — A Primer

By Irwin Hipsman

Community access television. A wonderful idea, but how do you make it a reality? After all the speeches are made, the contracts signed, the first subscriber turned on; then community access is supposed to happen. The beauty of access is that it reflects the needs, desires and spirit of the community it is in. The problem with access is that there is no single model for how it should be run.

The question as to how the access operation will be structured must be answered at the same time the cable franchise is granted or transferred, otherwise access will be delayed in getting off the ground. There are three general models for community access: it can be managed by the cable operator, the municipal government, or a non-profit corporation.

CABLE OPERATOR MANAGEMENT

There are two versions of this type of structure, public access and community television. In the early 1970's as a result of FCC mandates, cable companies found themselves in the business of operating public access facilities alongside their own local origination operations. Few of the people involved really knew what these parallel operations were all about, and the record is a mixed one. Some of the company-managed access facilities are still doing well many years later, others never got off the ground.

Community television is an off-shoot of these twin operations. During the franchising years of the early 1980's, some cable operators realized that access was here to stay, but the management of access needed to be updated. Community television combined access and LO into one management structure of shared facilities, resources and staff (and, sometimes, a channel). Community television offered significant cost savings, streamlined management, and a more positive view from the cable company and the community. To date, this type of management structure has often been quite successful, with most of the communities served by this model

generally satisfied with their local programming.

A primary advantage of the community television model is that access facilities can be built, equipped and staffed by the cable operator right along with the cranking up of the rest of the cable system. Access then becomes an integral part of the cable company's operations, and can generate understanding of access by the cable company's management staff (and vice versa).

There are disadvantages, too. Access decisions may have to move up through several levels of the company's organizational chart, and the community at large is generally left out of the process. Moreover, there can be a difficult balancing act as the revenue-producing local origination operations begin to compete with access for limited studio space, equipment and other resources.

MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT

Over the past several years, cities have sometimes chosen to run public access themselves. A main advantage to this model is that mechanisms for the day-to-day management tasks like payroll, mailing, budgeting, and decision-making are already up and running, so that the access operation can get up to speed quickly. Also, since the city government has a stake in the operation, city officials may be more supportive of access over the years.

However, city-run access can have its dangers. Access becomes a budgetary line item, and must compete with critical city services for funding. The access center may be open to political interference in hiring or programming. With the support of an enlightened City Council this model can work very well, but every Election Day could spell doom for the access operations.

NON-PROFIT CORPORATION MANAGEMENT

The final model of management is to create a new corporation whose sole man-

date is to provide community access. This model has increased in popularity in the past several years, especially in cities undergoing re-franchising or a transfer of the franchise to a new cable company. For example, during the initial franchise the cable company may have managed access, and, now that there is a large body of experience in the community, a non-profit corporation can be set up.

The advantage to the cable company is that it is relieved of the obligation to manage an entity which it may have found to be a source of difficulty. The disadvantage is that it costs more, since the new corporation has to be funded to cover the costs of administration, office facilities, and other such services formerly fulfilled under the company's roof.

Ideally, the non-profit corporation should be the most responsive to the community it serves. The Board of Directors is directly responsible to the community, without several layers of bureaucracy in between. Since access is the corporation's only business, there is a simpler decision-making process and fewer conflicts as to the organization's mission.

But this structure has its pitfalls, too. The processes of formation and incorporation can take considerable time and money. One-sided Boards of Directors can freeze out segments of the community. And if the corporation fails, access fails along with it — at least temporarily.

Each community must determine for itself which structure will be the most effective. Community television often delegates access to a basic level of operations; a "poor little brother" to local origination. Municipal management is prone to major pitfalls and the whims of politics. Non-profit corporations can work very well, provided they are set up properly and funded adequately. And the success or failure of any of these models will ultimately depend on the skills and energy of the managers, staff, and the community itself.

Irwin Hipsman is the Director of Somerville Community Access Television, Inc., Somerville, Massachusetts.

Transferring Management of Access

By Jan Sanders

Although basic cable service looks the same whether it is seen in Atlanta or Portland, or whether the cable company is Cox or ATC, what is different from franchise to franchise is who, how and if community access to the system is provided. During the heavy competition for franchises, the proposals surrounding access were what set one company apart from another; the companies that tailored their proposals to interests and uniqueness of a community often won the nod of the elected officials. The result — access management structures emerged as distinct and as varied as the cities in which they were located. No “trends” — every one different.

Libraries, community colleges, access organizations, and the cities and companies themselves were written into the proposals to manage access. So, about five years after the end of the franchise wars, are there any recognizable trends?

Although not overwhelming, there is an identifiable movement toward cable operators shedding the burden of access management. Looking at the industry as a whole, there has never been any love lost on access; in fact, in some instances there has been outright hostility. There has been litigation over access commitments, and tough political battles in Washington where the industry fought to legislatively eliminate access franchise commitments altogether.

Depending on where and from what perspective you look, the movement towards company divestment of access management responsibilities has been generally amicable, protracted, legally complicated, and eventually satisfying to all parties. Even though communities have been willing and in some cases eager to assume the management role while the company continues certain specified functions, it has generally been the companies which initiated the transfer. They never wanted the responsibility, they look at access as a financial loser, and most have yet to capitalize on the social value or marketing advantages of community programming.

So, seeking a needed cap on the expenses related to access, many companies have used franchise renegotiations, buyouts and mergers as the best time to transfer access management to a community nonprofit organization. Cities have taken varied roles in the process, by and large trying to accommodate the bottom-line business concerns of the companies. The cities have a vested interest in maximizing company revenues — their Congressionally-cleared five percent franchise fees are based on those revenues, and many cities are shoring up shaky budgets tightened by the elimination of Federal revenue-sharing programs.

Community access organizers have tended to be very comfortable with the transfer of management to nonprofit corporations. To many of them, producing programs under the auspices of organizations themselves, the new access corporation feels like home. Like Brer Rabbit, they find themselves being thrown into the briar patch — where they wanted to be all along.

What are the issues at stake as these franchises go through the transition from company-managed access to the new form? Consultants and negotiators are learning to ask a long list of questions in order to ensure each community of the valuable services they had counted on when they first awarded the franchise. How will existing equipment be transferred? Who will maintain it? How will the nonprofit be funded? How will its Board of Directors be selected? These and many more issues must be decided when the transitional wave hits the city.

Cable companies make the point that the nonprofit design provides for “more control by the community,” even when control has not been an issue. What cable operators want to do is cap their expenses. Many franchises, although specific regarding obligations, were not precise enough to protect cable operators from runaway local programming expenses. During the franchise wars companies either did not think it was to be a major item and therefore did not accurately reflect it in their

economic projections, or they thought they were going to make so much money that access costs would be easily absorbed. Interest rates, high construction costs and a stubborn market for cable service soon caused the big winners to start looking for relief. The divestment of access facilitation in many big city franchises began — for some, even before the cable system was completed!

The industry's preoccupation with the bottom line has caused companies to lose sight of the potential for a strong access/industry partnership. The possibilities are there, but continue to be negated by the industry's actions in the courts, before the FCC and in the media.

Because it generally has been cable companies who have initiated the change toward divestiture of access responsibilities, it is obvious that the companies bear watching. A good transfer agreement is one that is clear to everyone involved, one that is feasible as well as fair, and one that will not produce surprises (like lawsuits) later on. The cable company is not a goodwill organization, but it is one subject to the requirements of the franchise contract which it freely entered into originally.

The questions being asked across the country as cable operators maneuver into a new position in the communities where they operate are some of the same ones asked during franchising, they are simply being asked the second time around:

1) What is the dollar value per year of the franchise commitment? How will the payments be made; in one, two or more payments? Is the amount set at a flat rate, or is it dependent on the operator's revenues?

2) Will the video production equipment be turned over in good condition? If it needs replacement, will the dollar value be based on the current replacement value of a similar piece of equipment? What about equipment the company wants to repair instead of replacing? Who will own the equipment and be responsible for its insurance, maintenance and final replacement? What is the reasonable life expectancy of equipment, therefore how many

Continued on Page 38

Opening And Closing Doors In The Fun House: Trends In Local Origination

By Paul Braun

There is a legend about a fun house which was made up of doors. Some of the doors you passed were wide open, some were closed and some would open only if you knew the secret of the door. You could walk through any door and you might find treasures, or monsters, or both! And maybe the door would close and lock behind you, trapping you inside.

In the ancient past, maybe fifteen years ago, the fun house called Local Origination was a federally-regulated cost center of the cable television industry. Later, local origination and its bedfellow, access, became an important chip in the cable TV high stakes franchising game. Today, some old access producers and some cable operators have developed methods to use local origination as an incremental revenue stream and an image enhancer in a maturing business environment where customer service is the product. But what about tomorrow — a tomorrow with the promise of increased competition to the cable industry from such technologies as satellite dishes and millions of VCR's?

OPEN DOORS, CLOSED DOORS, AND DOORS WITH SECRETS

The evolution of local programming, both access and local origination, creates an interesting dilemma. At one time, its fate was based primarily not on economics but on regulation, and the normal path of the supporters of the concept was one of advocacy. Thus, the most frequently used doors were those which championed the cause of those unaware of access. As these doors were entered, more people became aware of the opportunities of access.

As the cable industry moves to a future where deregulation will play a large part, it follows that the regulation/advocacy role of local programming supporters will change to one based more on economics. These are, for the most part, unfamiliar doors. Some of the doors are just closed, though they are covered with the cobwebs and dust of disuse. Then there are other doors which need to have the forces of



Cable NewsCenter 7 reporter Matt Mulcahy prepares an on-site report on the crash of a light plane near Ithaca, NY. The photographer is Marcy Feathers.

time and resources put against them in order to find the secrets that open them.

So, we find an ever increasing number of people who are aware of the local programming opportunity. At the same time, those who have passed through the "awareness" door fall into two categories, those who are content to stop after passing through the first door and those who are looking for the next one. With all these people put together, it is unavoidable that there will be a discussion of the treasures and monsters that lie beyond the next set of doors. There will also be those who have already decided which door they will open next.

TREASURES, MONSTERS, OR BOTH?

As community television producers we all have spent long, hard hours creating our programs. We all know the feeling of turning off the last light in the studio, deciding that this will be the last edit or

storing the last piece of equipment in the mobile van. This is, in short, the feeling that the program is done. The reality is that it just puts you in front of the next door in the fun house.

It is easy to figure out what your next step will be when your program is a dog. You go back to the story board, learn from your mistakes, chalk it up to experience and start on a new program.

But what do you do if your show is a hit? An unbridled success? Your fun house door might be labelled "promotion" or "syndication" or "potential license fees" or "advertising opportunities." Other doors might be "cooperation with the cable company" or even "supporting the First Amendment rights of the industry." Whatever label is on the door, each producer of a successful local program is now making conscientious choices as to their next step. And, since cable companies are the major facilitators of local programming and the primary distributors of these programs, they are currently more likely to be faced

with the problem of what to do with a really hot program. The same concerns, of course, face the producer.

But the doors are closed. What treasures and monsters are behind them?

Promotion: This is not a question of where to stick up photocopied flyers, but of developing the best way to spend a promotion budget. You are no longer creating awareness of a program series, but developing and measuring tune-in of a specific episode. You are not increasing social consciousness, but are increasing the perceived value of basic cable by featuring cable-exclusive product. You are talking about a product that is "not available in any store," or through a satellite dish.

Expanding to a larger market: If your program is a hit in your hometown, why not across the county or across the country? National services such as the *Arts & Entertainment Network* have called on cable systems as producers of such activities as performance specials. Satellite time is available for lease to anyone to uplink such events as a sports event back to the visiting team's home town. The challenge becomes discovering the appropriate time to syndicate and the appropriate distribution method.

Charging those who want to use the program: If economics is now the name of the game, then there is value to a producer's efforts in creating a program that people want to see. If the producer does not value her or his work, neither will the potential client to whom it could be sold. Developing a rate card can be based on the production and distribution costs, or it could be based on a per subscriber fee for each telecast. But the point is that rate cards must be developed.

How about advertising? The balance of creative control and the compromise of advertising in a show sometimes presents a problem for the producer. If the producer has decided that it is OK to make money, then the whole arena of advertising is open. Underwriting, program sponsorship or commercial insertion are all options to be explored and are being developed today. Even if a cable company is not lucky enough to have a hot program fall into its lap, there are still several ways local origination is developing as a contributor to the success of the cable system.

Cooperation between producer and distributor: Many producers of local programming and cable companies have developed projects that meet community and economic needs. Low cost local programming can appeal to new subscribers and retain old subscribers. The comprom-

ise becomes one of satisfying community needs while also satisfying the demographic and economic needs of the cable operator. Today, there are such examples as local news programs, sports, subscriber-involvement game and talk shows and the coverage of special events like parades and elections. These are programs that meet the broad market demands of the subscriber and enhance the image of the cable company at the same time they provide a creative outlet for the producer.

Supporting the cable industry's First Amendment rights: There is a growing realization of the truth in the statement made by Charles Dolan, founder of Cablevision Systems, Inc.: "If all we are to our subscribers is a conduit, we can easily be replaced." This concept has been reinforced by the leadership of the National Cable Television Association. The economic incentives of deregulation have pushed the more innovative leaders in the cable industry into a position of supporting local origination as a demonstration of the industry exercising their First Amendment rights. Community producers can either work with these innovators or get out of the way of those others who will be willing to enter this door in the fun house.

Revenue generation through other methods: Just like a newspaper publisher looks for printing jobs to run on the presses during the downtime the paper is not being printed, the local origination manager is now in a position to rent both the unused production facilities or the unused time on the local origination channel. With more people now aware of the level of sophistication and production efficiencies of local origination equipment and the success of local commercial insertion on satellite services, there can now be a value assigned to the rental of equipment and the leasing of blocks of time. The challenge becomes a balance of selling the use of the facilities and the channel space and the use of the same resources in meeting the demands of the subscribers.

Additionally, local origination managers are able to expand into less traditional production roles. Using the facilities already in house, cable companies are now able to create such material as customer service training programs, product knowledge activities, and promotional acquisition and tune-in campaigns to be used both on the system and on broadcast television stations.

However, this trend should not be confused with any movement to buy additional local production equipment. Corporate management is still, for the most part,

unconvinced that there is a low enough risk and a high enough return to invest in additional bells and whistles for local production. The money seems to be going instead to adding and promoting premium channels or free, nationally-based services such as *Home Shopping Network* or *The Discovery Channel*.

THE DOORS MAY CLOSE AND LOCK BEHIND US. . . OR LOCK US OUT.

These trends in local origination can be looked upon as an opportunity or as a threat. If we understand that the people who have the clout in the cable industry have now hooked onto the idea that *exclusive cable product* is one of the keys to success against impending competitive technologies, we can grab hold and become a significant part of the decision-making process that will provide the creative alternatives in cable. This means going through unfamiliar doors with the possible result that we may not be able to go back, or that when we do go back, we will be looking at the same opportunity in a different way. We run the risk of becoming the same kind of high priests and priestesses of television which left so many of the people unaware of the power of video in the beginning days of access. This makes the challenge more scary but, it is hoped, more fun. It may also make it more important.

If we look at the trends in local origination as threats, then we are doomed to stagnate outside the closed doors and inbreed community programming out of existence.

The next fifteen years will need the dedication and leadership of a unique group of individuals who are willing to go through each new set of doors in the fun house while not losing the sense of discovery. These people will realize that the next set of doors will be just as much fun as the last, and will leave instructions for those who follow them through the doors and corridors of the Fun House.

Paul Braun is the Director of Programming for the National Division of American Television and Communications Corporation in Englewood, Colorado.

1986 Hometown USA Video Festival Set for Bicycle Tour

COMMUNITY TELEVISION AT ITS BEST

The Hometown USA Bicycle Tour presents the best local programs that cable television has to offer, selected from 1,200 videotapes entered in the 1986 Hometown USA Video Festival.

These tapes were produced by public access volunteers, production personnel of local cable companies, and staffs of local governments, organizations and institutions. There were nearly sixty-two award winners. The bicycle tour includes thirteen of these winning programs in three one-hour videotapes.

This showcase of innovative, thought-provoking and entertaining local programming is available for non-commercial presentation at your community event or on your cable system.

For information on how you or your organization can rent the Hometown USA Bicycle Tour, mail the coupon below or call Julie Omelchuck at (202) 544-7272.

Here are the programs included in this year's Hometown USA Bicycle Tour:

Both Sides of the Street 15 minutes from the *Documentary/Public Awareness* category, intimately portrays love, life and hardship in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco. Produced by Barbara Neal, who worked as a showgirl for sixteen years in the Tenderloin and left to pursue a Masters Degree in film.

Black/White Jokes 3 minutes from the *Video Art* category, is an adventure in short video art by producer David Kerr.

In the Dust of Dreams 25 minutes from the *Documentary Profile* category. The Mennonites of West Texas tell their story of struggle and survival. Produced and directed by David Harrienger, Jr.

Shout! 2 minutes from the *Public Service Announcement* category, is a masterpiece of animation by Lisa Craft. The PSA addresses nuclear disarmament.

Too Darn Hot 3 minutes from the *Entertainment* category, by volunteer producer Scott Haller, is an incredible display of one-camera shooting and editing.

Making Space. . . Burning Waste 22 minutes from the *Municipal Programming* category, tackles one of the issues that city government officials face and the public rarely understands. Produced by Sandra Holden and Barin Kumar for the City of Long Beach, California.

Choice and Change 4 minutes from the *Religious Programming* category, is a regular series produced for national distribution by the United Church of Christ. Segments of the series produced by William Winslow are shown.

Peace Spelling Bee is a 30-second PSA about peace, produced by the United Church of Christ.

The Joe Show 5 minutes from the *Programming for Youth* category, is a children's series produced in Austin, Texas by volunteer producer Bill Crawford. Highlights of the series are shown.

Letta 15 minutes from the *Documentary Profile* category, was produced by the Educational Video Center as a collaborative effort between teenagers in New York City and rural Appalachia.

Alone Together 26 minutes from the *Informational Programming* category. Originally produced for a conference about single parenthood by Gae Rusk for Human Services Television in Honolulu. Features single parents and their children playing all the key roles.

Video Spectrum 8 minutes from the *Innovative Programming* category, is a unique municipal access programming innovation. Conceived by the Channel L Working Group, it brought rarely-seen video works to the public and gave exposure and recognition to independent artists.

Rattlesnakes and Reunions 15 minutes from the *Documentary Event* category, focuses on an event unique to a community in rural Georgia. Produced by Sue Marsh and Farley Barge.

Hometown USA is sponsored in part by Fuji Photo Film USA.

*Hometown USA
Video Festival*

Access And Change: Strategies For Successful Implementation

By Speranza Avram

Those of us who work in public, educational, or government access are in the business of creating change. We are changing how people interact with television, how they work with technology, and how they communicate. As "change agents", there is a lot we can learn from researchers in a field of study called "diffusion of innovation".

An *innovation* is something new, or a new way of doing something. *Diffusion of innovation* is defined as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time to members of a social system". Its relevance to those of us in access operations has to do with how we convince people access is worth doing, how we train access users, and how we encourage producers to continue producing programs.

This article will discuss some general concepts in the field of innovation diffusion, and then show how an understanding of these concepts can be used to introduce access in an institutional setting. The information presented here is based on research into the successful integration of cable television into local government operations recently completed for the University of San Francisco.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

The first important concept of innovation diffusion is that most of us are inherently resistant to change. We like the familiar ways of doing things, the methods that have worked before, the comfortable solutions to problems. New technology or new procedures can be threatening, forcing us to learn something new that perhaps will make us look foolish or incompetent. So when someone offers us a new way of doing things, our first response is, "What's wrong with the old way?"

Researchers have identified five "barriers to participation" that are really arguments for staying with the *status quo*. As change agents, access workers have to find ways to overcome these barriers.

The first barrier is known as "relative advantage;" that is, how much better is this innovation than the old way of doing things? What can access do for me or my organization that isn't already being done by the *status quo*? In answering this question, it is important to remember that advantages can take both tangible forms, such as reaching more people, or intangible forms, such as an increased sense of importance or status.

In addition, relative advantage is not a concrete fact, but rather a perception that people hold. So, while your access operation may in fact be successful, it may be perceived by potential users as not being as valuable as other forms of outreach. Therefore, it is important to maintain an image that will favorably impress potential new users.

A second barrier to participation is how "compatible" the innovation is with existing values, past experiences, and needs of the potential users. Something that is more compatible has a greater likelihood of being used than something that is extremely different. For example, an organization that has never sought to communicate with the public may be reluctant to use television as their first experiment with media relations. Perhaps a newsletter might be more appropriate for their first project. However, an organization that is comfortable sharing their message with the public might be much more interested in expanding their already existing public relations efforts to including television.

Compatibility is an important consideration when introducing access to organizations. It is often difficult to sell access simply for access' sake. It is much easier to show how local programming can help an organization meet its already defined goals, such as improving public awareness of their services, for example. When choosing projects to introduce an organization to access, select something which fits in to already defined goals and objectives of the organization.

The more difficult something is, the less likely that people will want to try it. This

perception of "complexity" is another barrier to participation and a difficult one for access to overcome. Most people perceive television as complicated and beyond their control. This is where well-designed training programs are essential to successful access operations. Making people feel comfortable with the technology and at ease with this new way of communicating will go a long way to reducing the anxiety that can be associated with new technology.

"Trialability" is the extent that an innovation can be tested on a limited basis. If potential users can experiment with something new without a large commitment of resources, they are more likely to try it. Many access centers offer a short, introductory course to access production designed to give people an overview of the production process. Although some people may decide that production is too much work for them at this stage, this simple way to find out about the process encourages exploration by larger numbers of people.

Finally, an innovation that is highly visible is more likely to be tried than one that no one hears about. So, "observability" increases the likelihood that people will want to try something new. For access operations, observability can take two forms. First is evidence that people in the community are indeed watching access programs, thereby encouraging new producers that their efforts will be worthwhile. Second, the access center itself must be perceived as being an important community organization, thereby giving the credibility that comes with visibility.

THE STUDY: INTRODUCING ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONS

An understanding of these five barriers to participation can be very useful to individuals attempting to convince organizations, schools or local governments to commit resources to access productions. In my study of five successful municipal

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Access and Change...

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access operations, I found that these barriers had been successfully overcome in a variety of ways.

In cooperation with the NFLCP, I researched the municipal access operations of Madison, Wisconsin; Kansas City, Missouri; Spokane, Washington; Tacoma, Washington; and Beverly Hills, California to determine if there were any similarities in the way these departments had developed their access operations. These five cities were selected because they had been in operation more than three years, operated only government access channels, and were judged to be among "the best" by three national cable television organizations. Although these are all municipal access operations, their success stories carry valuable lessons that can be used by anyone attempting to start access opera-

tions in an institutional setting.

One of the most important factors in developing institutional access is the location of the "change agent" (access manager) in the political hierarchy of the organization. The more status the change agent has, the more status will be attached to the people who try the innovation. In all five of the cities, government access was managed from a separate, central administrative unit, rather than as part of another department. Their mandate was to provide services to all departments and they had the clout of city administration behind them to increase their credibility.

In introducing access to an institution, it is important to show how access can improve existing public relations efforts. Producing programs that bring about measurable results can help increase the credibility of a new cable TV department. For example, the cable TV department in the City of Tacoma produced a Public Service Announcement on adoption of

black children which aired on the local broadcast station. The city received 25 qualified families within a very short time, an achievement that had never occurred during the previous five years when television was not used as an outreach tool.

Showing how cable TV can assist the city in achieving already defined goals and objectives is an important way of breaking down the compatibility barrier. By producing programs with other city departments such as public safety, libraries, and parks and recreation, access managers are integrating themselves into the city service structure. This is important for a number of reasons. First, being perceived as a service department for other city operations is a valuable way to justify funding during budget time. Second, being perceived as part of the team improves the likelihood that departments will feel comfortable working cooperatively on programming projects. Finally, because cable TV is often perceived as an unnecessary frill by other departments, it is important to prove how valuable the service can be in improving city services overall.

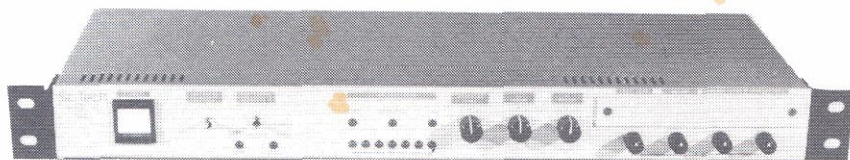
One interesting finding of the study was the lack of training of other city staff that occurs in these five cities. This increases the likelihood that TV will be perceived as complex, and may reduce participation by other city staff in cable TV projects. However, some very valid reasons were presented to explain this lack of training. First, many cities do not encourage cross-training in functional areas, perceiving it as unnecessary. Secretaries do not perform the duties of a fire technician, and sanitation workers do not learn how to operate a video camera. Secondly, many of the government access centers did not have enough production resources to implement an extensive training program, yet still produce programming. However, all of the cable TV managers interviewed for this study indicated that de-mystifying the production process to encourage the involvement of other city staff was an important part of their job. This involvement centered on functional departments providing "content experts" to work on scripts for access programs.

Trialability is a normal way that cities implement new projects. It allows experimentation with something new without expending a large amount of resources. For example, the very first time staff brought the concept of cable TV to the City Council of Beverly Hills, the council declined to support it. Three years later,

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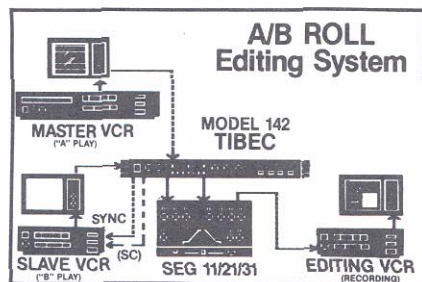
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Educational Access: We've Only Just Begun

By Diana Braiden Radspinner

Educational Access — what is it, and where is it going? Access comes in all sizes and shapes. Large cities and small communities are all using it as a resource to inform, instruct and communicate. Students learn, staff members participate, and community members come closer to their schools.

We have surveyed a number of access facilities and school districts to ascertain exactly how educational access is being used. What we found was exciting. Although the approaches were different, the end results are similar.

Educational access is being used in these ways:

To Inform: School districts across the country produce programs that tell about Board decisions, special projects, community involvement, curriculum and student activities. They are producing programming designed to bring information about educational issues directly to citizens.

To Instruct: Both students and staff are using access in a much more sophisticated manner than the "TV Teaching" of the fifties and sixties. Instructional television now means more than turning on the TV and sitting back. The replay of specific programming to better meet a teacher's schedule has made the television set a useful resource. Teleconferences and live instruction allow students to attend classes that otherwise would not be available. Educational consortia provide services to smaller districts that were not affordable before.

To Communicate: Both video and data on broadband cable are significantly impacting education. Interactive live programming allows students and staff the opportunity to meet and discuss issues across the city or the nation. Electronic bulletin boards are fast becoming the new-letters of tomorrow.

A GRAB BAG OF EDUCATIONAL ACCESS USERS:

Interactive two-way video is the focal

point of some exciting programming in the **Minneapolis** area. Susan Murphy, Educational Consultant for Rogers Cablesystems, reports that four local school districts have joined together to produce daily interactive language instruction on the elementary, junior and senior high levels. The districts involved are Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins and Richfield. In its fourth year of operation, this program provides instruction in Japanese to elementary and high school students, and German and Latin to junior high students. Funding for the project comes from the State Department of Education's Special Project Division.

Minnetonka, a fifth district involved in the educational consortium, participates with the other four in a "schools cable exchange." Each district promotes the ways they are using cable and highlights various activities in their district. Since one-third of the area residents do not have students in school, much of the programming is designed to inform them of district activities and give them a better understanding of how their tax dollars are being used.

Besides straight video programming, the "Children's Channel" features drawings and poems composed by students of all ages. The pictures and text are created using a Telidon computer, and run continuously. "Project Connect" features stories and drawings from students in the Soviet Union. Hopefully, this program will be expanded next year to include other countries.

Do you want a little exercise? "Take a Walk With an Architect!" This program is a cooperative effort between the schools and the Minnesota Architectural Society. Produced by, and with, a crew of elementary, junior and senior high students trained to use 3/4-inch video equipment, the show visits various neighborhoods. The host architect talks with students about the various economic, social, cultural and physical factors that go into planning and building a community.

"Especially for Parents" is a live call-in monthly show aimed at the parents of pre-

schoolers. Some of the topics covered on this program are "How to Pick a Day-Care Center," "The Working Parent," "Blended Families," and "How to Be a Step-Parent."

Sound like a lot of work? It is, but the programming is providing needed services for the Minneapolis area communities.

Cable is alive and well in the **Hurst-Euless-Bedford (HEB)** Independent School District near Dallas, Texas. Currently, the District is using the cable system's institutional network to provide instructional programming to all its schools on four channels from 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. daily. The programming is sent to the cable system headend via the Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) transmitter operated by the Regional Instructional Television Consortium in nearby Richardson.

The HEB schools are using their institutional network for staff development. Faculty may accrue compensatory time by building up credits while watching programming cablecast directly into their school. Programming is distributed on the subscriber network via the District's access channel, "Cable 28." This channel features shows designed to provide the community with information about their school district. Monday through Friday from 5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., residents can tune in and watch programming ranging from high school sports to drug awareness. Not only are the sports activities taped with commentary, students use clips from the program and develop a weekly sports update.

All the programming on Cable 28 is written and produced by students. A recent highlight was a community-based live program dealing with drug-related issues. A panel of community representatives discussed the issues and took questions from a studio audience. This is one way HEB officials are trying to involve the entire community in its anti-drug program.

An extensive application of broadband cable for data communications has been in use by HEB schools for several years. A

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Educational Access...

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student information system handles attendance, grades, registration, and other tasks from a central office location. Staff can access the district warehouse inventory before placing purchase orders. Future data applications will include an electronic mail network between all buildings.

Ronnie Banner, Director of Research and Development for HEB, reports that the network is providing "a communications system that will last us into the next century." The students and staff in Hurst-Euleless-Bedford are profiting now from the foresight and planning that went into building this model system.

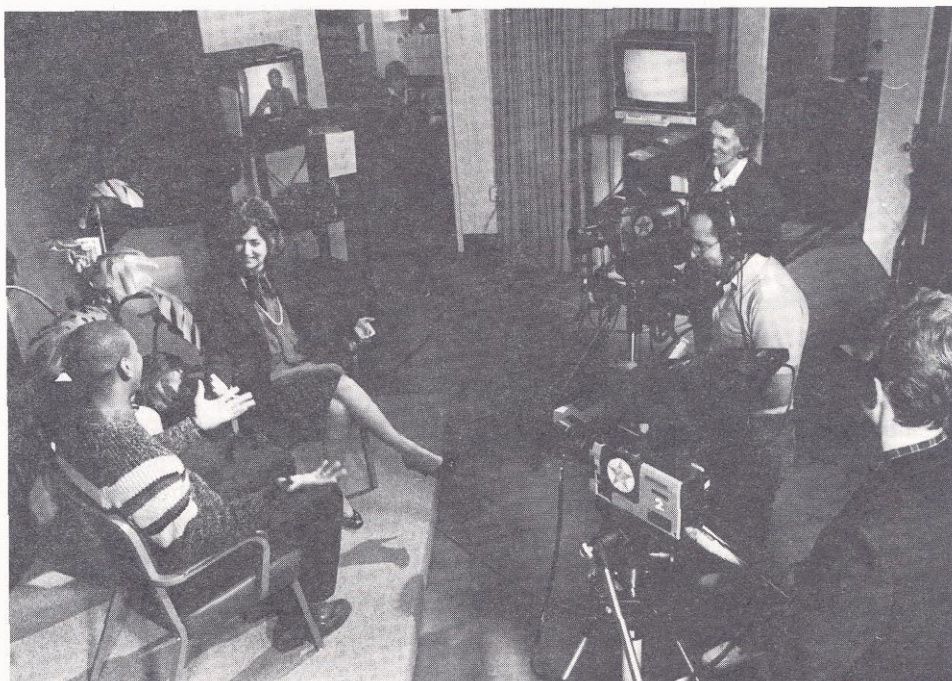
Trenton, Michigan Public Schools' video connection dates back to 1978 when a high school language arts teacher named Dennis Hamilton saw great potential in the use of television to supplement teachers' activities. He put together a proposal and was awarded an \$18,000 Title IV-B grant. With that money, he purchased two cameras, two monitors and a video recorder. Slowly, he built a library of videotapes that were used by teachers.

During the early 1980's the school district was active in the franchise negotiations in Trenton. These efforts were rewarded with a yearly allocation for educational access. Using these and other funds, Trenton schools built a studio which opened in 1982.

Since then, Dennis Hamilton's student production teams have produced over eight hundred programs. The students program a two-hour block of channel time, with each student responsible for a fifteen-minute show every two weeks. Subjects range from alcohol and substance abuse to arthritis, from myopic surgery to Grand Prix races, from computer classrooms to juvenile crime. Students have interviewed Michigan governor James Blanchard and set out for Lake Erie to highlight environmental protection at work.

Trenton is using its cable to provide staff development at the district level. They also have developed programs designed to highlight special projects for the public.

Hamilton reports that in 1979, the District was spending about \$4,000 annually to rent films. Now, less than \$400 per year is spent, with the extra money going to purchase videotapes. Instructional programming is picked up off M-STAR and



During this interview session, Durrand Hill, seated on left, is talking with Diana Radspinner to his left. Seated in background is Linda Haycook. Videotaping the interview from background to foreground is Janet Driegert, Herb Garza and David Wagoner.

rebroadcast to better fit teachers' schedules.

Recently, Trenton joined with other cities across the country to participate in a national teleconference. Working with the CLOSEUP Foundation and C-SPAN, Trenton's students were able to hear experts from the National Geographic Society discuss their controversial new findings which question the site of Christopher Columbus' landing. (See "Our Search for the True Columbus Landfall," *National Geographic*, November 1986 — Ed.)

It took one classroom teacher, vision on the part of others, and lots of hard work, but this school district has moved into the 1980's with a communications system that helps its students learn, its staff teach and its community stay informed.

Mr. Carl Pilnick is a consultant hired by the City of **Santa Ana, California** to help implement several pilot projects that encompass both video and data on the institutional network for the City and schools. The Santa Ana School District previously used an ITFS system to provide instructional programming. Currently, the District is using four cable channels for regularly scheduled instruction. A fifth channel is being used for special request, one-time playback.

The second phase of this pilot project will provide overnight delivery of requested programming. An automated playback system will send the program to video recorders at the local school site.

This will not require staff to be present during the evening at either end.

In a second project, Santa Ana Community College is linking its campus computer to terminals in various parks and recreation areas around the city, where citizens can take courses leading towards a Graduate Equivalency Diploma. A future project will see the interconnect of the College media center videodisk system with terminals in high schools and libraries, for access to the College's photographic collection.

Four years ago, Dr. Thomas Madron of the North Texas State University Computing Center in **Denton** was faced with a decision of how to expand his services in a cost effective manner. After examining various options, it was decided that a broadband cable network would best fill the need for an integrated video/data delivery system.

Currently, NTSU is operating three basic broadband data communications networks on a single cable. Additionally, they are delivering a variety of video services to staff, students and community members. The data services support individual, administrative, and security functions. The system offers access to BITNET, a world-wide higher education electronic mail network, and provides direct communication links with other institutions. Additionally, the staff is served by a private library automation system for circulation and acquisition. A third network provides services to outlying university

facilities. For example, the student newspaper is composed daily and transmitted across campus to the print shop via cable to be typeset. There are over seven miles of broadband cable delivering service to 6,000 drops on the NTSU campus.

Video services support an NTSU access channel on Denton's cable system, which is available on campus. Programming for the channel is provided by the Radio/TV Department. Additionally, a separate channel is available for staff use for delivery of instructional programming obtained from a variety of sources.

There is an on-campus channel devoted to the Association for Higher Education of North Texas. Classes in Management and Computer Science originate at NTSU and are sent via cable and microwave to area industries such as Texas Instruments and Bell Helicopter. From all points on campus, broadband cable is actively being used in a telecommunications system designed to serve students and staff.

Big things are happening at **Virginia Beach, Virginia**. Educational access and municipal access have joined forces. They are about to move into a new half-million-dollar studio. Channel 28, the educational access channel, currently is programming eight regular series:

"On Location; Virginia Beach" takes viewers to happenings all over town. The half-hour news program is produced by high school students.

"Citytalk", a monthly series in which students interview local government leaders, is used by social studies and government teachers as a part of their curriculum.

"Continuing Excellence" is important in anything we do. In Virginia Beach, outstanding projects are identified and featured on this magazine program.

"Speaking of Education" is a fifteen-minute interview show hosted by Dr. Ben Trotman, the school district Director of Curriculum. The program centers on the activities in Virginia City schools.

"For the Health of It," why not watch television and get physically fit at the same time? This program examines wellness issues and provides current information on health topics.

"Curtain Call" showcases original student performing arts presentations as they occur.

More activities are planned, reports Educational Cable Coordinator Bill Phippen. In the planning stage is "Retro-news 28." For this series, Bill is working with a major TV network to allow Channel 28 to tape newscasts. Students will then rewrite selected stories and use the

video footage. From these, they will develop a printed "Newsguide," complete with vocabulary lists and follow-up activities.

"A City Emerges" is also being planned. This oral history of Virginia Beach will bring "students" of all ages together. Current high school students will provide the technical know-how, and older "students of life" will relate their remembrances of the area.

Has "No Pass, No Play" got you down? In **Sacramento, California** all you have to do to get help with that sticky equation is pick up the phone and call the "Homework Helpline." Originating from California State University — Sacramento, this interactive program answers questions for math students in grades 7 through 12. Two teachers from the local school district are the on-camera talent, while honors math students answer the phones and field questions from the six incoming telephone lines. The program airs once a week from 4:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Plans are under-way to include the elementary grades, increase cablecasts to three times a week, and expand to other subject areas.

Students are not the only ones who benefit educationally from cable in Sacramento. Once a month, teacher inservice training is held via the cable system. Among other projects, the staff is using a purchased "English as a Second Language" series, and adapting it to fit their local area needs. Instructional programming from the local PBS television station is also recorded and replayed at various times on cable to provide flexibility for staff and students.

The cable system, still under construction, presently serves approximately 30,000 homes in Sacramento County. At completion, school district programming will be seen in approximately 200,000 homes.

What makes all this work? The key, according to Elizabeth Rhodes, Executive Director of the Sacramento Educational Cable Consortium, is cooperation — between school districts, area universities, local governments, and the cable company. Who wins? The students and staff of Sacramento area schools win!

A school district the size of **Dallas, Texas** faces real challenges when it comes to building a cable system to interconnect its 235 buildings. A telecommunications network that will cover 351 square miles and serve 130,000 students and 14,000 staff is, by its nature, very complex.

Currently, the District operates an award-winning video channel that goes

into over 80,000 homes on the Heritage Cablevision system. Programming starts at 8:00 A.M. and continues until 10:00 P.M. daily. The major focus of the channel is public information. Regularly scheduled series include "School Zone," "DISD Today," "Charlas Escolares," "Drugs and You," "The Report Card," "Operation Involvement," "Reader's Guide," "Whiz Quiz," "Stumpers" and "5 Fantasy Lane." These series programs combine with locally produced specials featuring students and community activities. The goal is to bring the schools into the community — and the community into the schools! This fall, over 5,000 classroom teachers were able to view state-mandated staff development at their home school site. Other District-related staff development is aired regularly on the channel.

A pilot project using broadband cable for data transmission currently is serving ten schools for attendance recording. By January 1987, a total of twenty schools will be on-line. The system will be evaluated and more schools brought up until all 185 schools are using the cable.

Future plans include eventual use of cable for energy management and security surveillance. Cooperation between the cable company and the Dallas schools has resulted in major growth. Working together, they are providing services for both students and staff that will help the city of Dallas grow.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Data communication on broadband cable continues to be an unresolved issue. Schools are anxious to develop telecommunications networks to provide inter- and intra-facility data exchange. The technology is available, but at this point the cost of modems and unbuilt institutional networks continue to hinder development. It appears to be a classic "chicken and egg" issue — the cost of broadband modems is high because demand is low, but demand will stay low until the price comes down.

Unbuilt institutional networks have not thrown the issue of data transfer out the window, but this problem certainly has complicated the matter in many cities. The use of the subscriber network for data transfer is an alternative, and is being used successfully in Dallas and other locations. Educational access for data transmission on institutional networks appears to be linked to industrial demand for this capability. If the private sector provides a

Continued on Page 38

Access And The Liability Insurance Crisis

By Kari Peterson

The liability insurance crisis is something we are hearing a lot about these days. When I called the California Association of Non-Profits (CAN) to find information for this article, I had barely begun my introductory comments before the woman on the other end second-guessed the purpose of my call by replying, "Are you looking for D&O insurance?"

This has been the most common kind of call made to CAN's Executive Hotline over the past six months. As Board members of non-profit organizations know only too well, there is indeed a liability insurance crisis. It has been increasingly difficult for Boards of Directors to renew their liability insurance policies, leaving Directors and Officers (D&O's) uncovered and uncomfortable.

Understanding these causes and being better able to identify the warning signs leading to an insurance problem may better equip a non-profit access organization to handle these difficult times.

I researched the problems that non-profits are facing in California, and found that the same dilemmas exist across the country. Pamela Davis, research analyst for CAN, outlined several factors and causes for the current liability insurance situation.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

The most significant cause of the current crisis, analysts generally agree, is the state of the economy. The health of the insurance industry fluctuates according to the rise and fall of interest rates. As interest rates drop, insurance companies receive smaller returns on their investment of premiums, causing a decrease in their cash flow. To counteract this effect, companies increase rates. Tripling, or even quadrupling premiums has been a common response of companies to the economy's lower interest rates.

In addition to these economic factors, there has been an increased incidence of court cases revolving around liability issues. The phenomenal increase in the

number of lawsuits, and in the size of jury awards, has added to the insurance companies' panic and caution.

The problem does not end here. In order to spread their risk and share in the payout of claims, insurance companies, in almost all cases, seek their own insurance coverage, called "reinsurance." The cost of reinsurance is, of course, paid out of the premiums paid by you, the insurance customer.

Reinsurance is most often purchased from foreign companies. The overseas providers have observed the economic and courtroom problems of our insurance industry, and enter into contracts with American companies very cautiously. Reinsurance companies have increased their rates, again forcing American insurance rates upward. This further exacerbates the situation for the foundation or non-profit corporation looking for liability coverage.

These are the key causes of the current situation. It is a complex, predictable and, unfortunately, unavoidable trend. The insurance and reinsurance markets are simply vulnerable to the ebbs and flows of the economy. It has happened before, and will likely happen again.

WHAT TO DO?

So, in light of the clear and unquestioned fact that there is an insurance crisis, what is the best course of action for the Directors and Officers of non-profit community television organizations?

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer or solution. CAN's Davis' best advice is to "Hang in there," until economic changes improve the insurance industry's position. Remember, says Davis, that this is a period of low industry capacity. Insurance companies are probably not going to experience any harder times than this (at least in the foreseeable future); in other words, it can only get better. In the meantime, there are several steps a non-profit organization can take to improve its chances of finding affordable liability insurance:

1) A non-profit will likely have better success reapplying to its present or former

insurance carrier than starting with a new one. Loyalty wins a lot of points in the insurance business.

2) Because the number of companies providing D&O insurance to non-profits has dropped in recent years, and, given that there are more non-profits seeking coverage, your access organization is going to have to submit a superior application. As with job or grant applications, it will be important to "get into the right pile." Therefore, send clear, original financial statements and reports, and generally give the insurance application priority attention.

3) Any information you can provide the insurance company that will afford them a better understanding of what you do, will increase their awareness and comfort level. One reason that non-profits are so hard hit by hard times in the insurance industry, is that insurers know relatively little about the non-profits. Non-profit organizations often serve very specific community needs. There are an enormous number of these organizations, and the services of each are not widely known. Most importantly, the risks inherent in each of these organizations are unknown to the insurers. And, although the risks may be much smaller than those of a large for-profit firm, many insurers would rather not take the chance with something unknown. Therefore, facilitate a personal meeting with the insurance agent and, even better, invite them to your facility. Make the insurance company aware of what you do to minimize risks.

4) Your Board must operate as professionally as possible. This means holding regular meetings, keeping complete minutes and records, handling money responsibly, and retaining good legal and financial advisors.

5) Do not wait until your policy expires to reapply. Apply at least ninety days before expiration, and *apply before September* — that's when your insurance company begins its negotiations with its reinsurers.

Davis stresses again, especially if you are presently operating without insurance,

that you cover yourself by conducting your business in a professional manner. Do not leave yourself open to lawsuits by neglecting to secure sound legal and financial advice. Examine your operating and management policies and ensure that fairness and professionalism are being carried out.

Certainly a comforting note in this dismal situation is that, according to NFLCP Executive Director Sue Buske, there are no known cases of lawsuits filed against access corporation boards.

If you are one of the access corporations operating without liability coverage, it is nice to know that there is little or no precedence for legal action against you. Buske explained that few access centers sought D&O insurance coverage until recently. Still, in this time of exorbitant premiums and difficulty in finding underwriters, caution and sound operating practices are well-advised.

OUTLOOK AND ALTERNATIVES

The question for the future is, will non-profits always be vulnerable to the unavoidable ebbs of the insurance industry?

A trend certainly is taking shape which looks to offer alternatives to the existing liability insurance coverage available to non-profit access corporations. In California, for example, there are several options currently under study for improving the availability, affordability and stability of liability insurance for private non-profits. These options include (1) Group insurance, (2) "Captive" insurance companies and (3) Non-profit Risk Pools. These options represent ways in which non-profits can gain control over their liability coverage and not be as vulnerable to outside influences that are unrelated to their operation.

Group insurance is a concept best known in the field of health insurance, where employers typically take out policies for their staff as one of the benefits of employment. Insurance companies will cut rates to the bone in order to win a large corporate or government group health insurance contract.

Group liability insurance, while potentially a useful short run strategy, offers little protection against future insurance industry ebbs, which could result in the cancel-

lation of the entire group's policy. As a group, the likelihood of securing coverage is probably greater than on an individual basis, but rates are still going to fluctuate and will go up during times of low industry capacity.

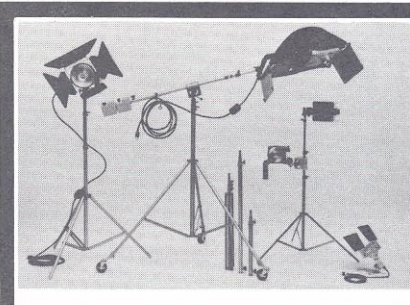
A **Captive** is a cooperatively-owned insurance company, often established in a foreign country by a group of similar organizations or individuals. Although the captive company can provide stable and reliable protection, the capital required to start one is substantial and must be raised by the members of the group.

Risk Pooling may become the most viable option in the near future. In a risk pool, a number of organizations join together to support an independently capitalized and managed non-profit entity. This new corporation pools the member organizations' (usually lower) premiums to cover administration, claims, reinsurance, and other costs. Risk pools write insurance and determine premiums on the basis of the actual risk. They are not trying to gain market share, and are therefore less vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy. The risk management is done by specialists familiar with non-profits — price and capacity stability are achieved as a result.

These alternatives will hopefully outline a trend in the industry. Soft and tight markets have, historically, been an insurance industry reality. This present crisis, because of its severity, has increased state and national legislative attention which may minimize future crises. The solutions are long-term, and therefore will not immediately solve the problems faced by access and other non-profit corporations.

For now, organizations seeking to purchase insurance should watch the industry closely. Things should be improving during the first part of 1987, so it may be worthwhile to submit applications on a monthly basis — one will come through before long. Until then, as I said earlier, **Hang In There!**

Kari Peterson is Co-op Manager and Manager of Local Programming for the Davis Community Cable Cooperative in Davis, California.



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in
the
dark
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GOVERNMENT CORNER:

James City County Government Access; Sacramento County Election Coverage

By Andy Beecher

Those of us who do not have A/B Roll editors or hot new cameras, Steadicams or digital video effects generators in our foreseeable futures should take heart. There are operations throughout the country producing great government access with little more than imagination and determination. As Veronica "Ronnie" Nowak, Communications Administrator for the county of James City, Virginia put it: "Scarce resources foster innovation."

James City County is located in southeastern Virginia, one of the most picturesque and historic areas in the nation. If the names Jamestown, Williamsburg, Yorktown and Newport News mean anything to you, you know the general vicinity we are talking about.

Almost 350 years after the founding of Jamestown, a cable television franchise was signed with Continental Cablevision to serve the area. Public, educational and government access channels were established, and James City County, Nowak says, "immediately began cablecasting character-generated messages on its government channel while experimenting with occasional programming such as budget messages and taped presentations." In 1984, she continues, "at the urging of the County Administrator, [the County] initiated a studio-based interview program, *County Close-Up*, and in 1985, the Board of Supervisors took the leadership in authorizing live cablecasts of the Board and Planning Commission meetings."

Nowak listed the objectives for the County's government access:

- programming the channel on a continuous, 24-hour basis;
- producing live, call-in interview cablecasts about current local issues;
- involving citizens in the productions "so they see the government channel as *their* channel;
- providing forums for discussion of complex issues "by producing programs that stimulate citizen input rather than provide solutions;"
- cablecasting public meetings so that citizens can better understand and participate in local government; and

—providing "a public information vehicle for appropriate community agencies lacking video resources."

What has made this operation successful, Nowak explains, is that the County has been careful to establish a broad base of citizen support; and that has required a low-budget, experimental approach to program development. A citizen-based Cable Advisory Committee "takes a leadership role in promoting cable programming." The Committee has promoted coverage of government meetings, budget requests for equipment, and viewership of the channel in general.

As for the low budget, this one may sound familiar to some of you innovators out there. Would you believe \$7,500 for all productions including public meetings, and \$3,500 for equipment? Of course, Nowak gets a lot of help from her friends:

"The County began cable programming with borrowed equipment, volunteer help, no budget, and lots of ideas. Presently, the Communications Administrator has varied public relations responsibilities with approximately one fourth of this staff person's time devoted to cable production. Volunteers and Continental Cablevision personnel assist in producing government programming without cost. Other production services are provided through contracts with freelance video professionals.

"The County does not own a studio. On-site video programs are produced by local cable company personnel who produced a public access magazine format program. . . . When a studio is needed, Continental's facility has been used. The County owns a camera and a portable video recorder." Cablecasting equipment is housed "in a closet adjoining the Board Room." Playback is accomplished using an industrial timer to run the VCR's.

James City County is a leader in providing its citizens with access to government. It has done so frugally, yet with enough innovation and community support to pull it off. And it has done so in style: at the 1986 annual conference of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, James City County

was cited for 'Outstanding Government Programming.' And after only 350 years!

Sacramento Cable Subs are Plugged Into Their Election Office

On Tuesday, November 4, cable subscribers in Sacramento County, California were the first to know how an array of 53 candidates' races and ballot measures were going at the county's polling places. Thanks to the Sacramento Metropolitan Cable TV Commission and the Sacramento County Department of Systems and Data Processing, immediate returns were visible not only to the election office, but to the households on the cable system.

Speranza Avram, who is Senior Coordinator for the SMCTC, explains: "We were already using our channel to display the November ballot information prior to the election. It made a lot of sense to see if we could display the election results as well." They began to consider options such as having a character generator operator being in contact with the election office and typing in the information received over the phone.

"We were concerned that the information would be delayed too much by the time it takes the C.G. operator to completely re-enter the returns," said Avram. "Also, Bob Smith, Executive Director of the Commission, was concerned about the accuracy of such a system — that with the volume of races we would be dealing with, there were bound to be some errors."

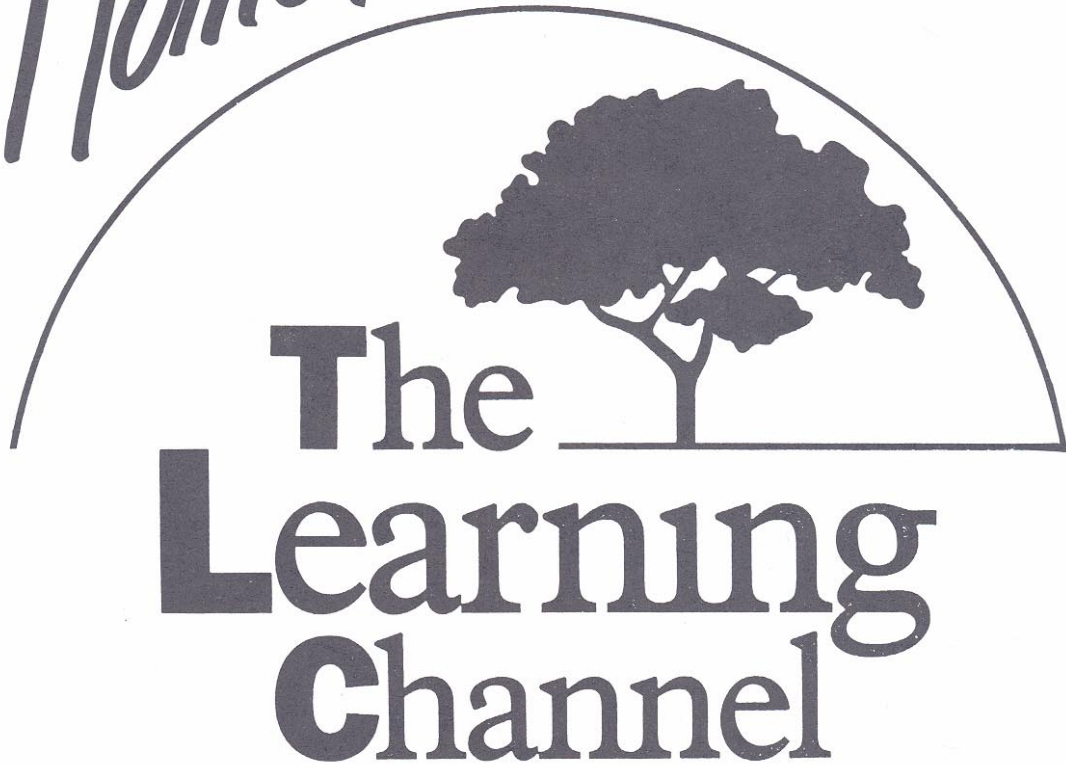
Smith suggested that the staff look into developing a completely automated system, thereby reducing the potential for human error.

Avram and the Commission staff then turned their attention to the mainframe ballot-counting computer at the Department of Systems and Data Processing (S&DP), the agency which had designed and now operates the County's election returns system. If the mainframe could be interfaced with the cable system, the problems of speed and accuracy would be solved.

This possible solution presented the staff

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Hometown USA



Learning Channel series times:

Fridays 8:30 PM

Saturdays 10:30 PM

(following) Mondays 11:30 PM

(ALL TIMES EASTERN)

Government Access...

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with a new problem — how to make the computer output visible in “living room” format. The question was, “How do you take a display which was intended for use by someone seated a foot from a computer terminal, and make it into a display which will readable by a cable subscriber sitting at home fifteen feet from the TV?”

After a few false starts, the Commission and S&DP staffs developed a system that worked. Here is what they did:

The Commission already owned an IBM PC-XT personal computer. They acquired a Color Graphics Adapter (CGA) for it, which provided them with the means to both develop more legible characters, and to add a video output port to the back of the computer. “Then we bought a couple of \$79.00 dial-up telephone modems so that the mainframe could talk to the PC,” explains Rich Esposto, also a Senior Coordinator with SMCTC. “The S&DP people installed a ‘protocol converter,’ which modifies the data so that information coming from the mainframe would be translated into a more legible display format. This reformatted data was then transmitted over the phone lines to the PC, which changed it into video. We patched the video output from the CGA directly into the channel modulator at the cable system headend.”

What this all means, of course, is that as soon as the ballots came in from the polling places and were entered into the S&DP computer (except for absentee ballots, all the ballots are the punched-card variety), the updated results were displayed instantaneously on the cable TV system. Where the computer terminals in the election office displayed 80 characters per line, the home viewer saw a much more readable 40-character display. Furthermore, the CGA allowed the Commission staff to provide a white character on a blue background which is, as we all know, pleasant to watch and easy to read.

Each race was displayed for an 11-second interval, triggered by the mainframe itself. Therefore, it took about nine minutes to display the results of all 53 races on election night.

At 8:30PM, MetroCable 28 (the government channel) ran a five-minute introductory tape, explaining what the viewers would be seeing. Then the returns came on and ran “live” throughout the night and during the following day. Every

half-hour during the cablecast, a voiceover tape gave the station I.D. and a brief explanation of the “program.”

Avram explained that the management of the cable company, Sacramento Cable, “is really excited about this, too. People can use a local cable channel as their primary source of local returns on election night.” An important bonus is that local election results were available on MetroCable 28 at least twenty minutes ahead of the local television stations!

If readers would like additional information on Sacramento County's new com-

puter interface for instantaneous election returns write to Speranza Avram, c/o CTR, P.O. Box 161617, Sacramento, CA 95816. Or, if you have developed your own innovations for cablecasting election returns, write to the author: Andy Beecher, MACC, 1815 NW 169th Place, Suite 6020, Beaverton, OR 97006. Ideas will be included in future installments of the “Government Corner.”

Andy Beecher is Acting Director of the Metropolitan Area Cable Commission in Beaverton, Oregon.

The Politics Of Public Access

By Bob Oringel

In *The Access Manager's Handbook*, a book recently published by Focal Press and co-authored by this writer and NFLCP's Sue Buske, the authors allude in one chapter to the politics which surround and often invade the world of public access television. When the manuscript went to press, one particular story had not yet played out to its conclusion. It was an important enough story to tell in the book anyway, even without an ending.

I propose here to retell that story, with its conclusion arrived at, and told with 20/20 hindsight. In so doing, I hope to make a strong case for *the importance of paying more than casual attention to the politics* which can make or break community television in your municipality. This is an object lesson for *your* access leadership.

Playing the politics of access can be the most crucial aspect of the access center's outreach program. Specifically stated, the politics of access concerns keeping the local community's politicians aware of, and involved in, public access. Further, their involvement must start at the very beginnings of the access center. If the center's outreach and public relations efforts reach everyone else in the community, but fail to reach the local politicians, then access may very well be doomed to failure. Politicians are rarely neutral people, they are either for you or against you.

The access center's outreach effort to the pols must include describing the access philosophy, it must let them know how access works, and it must tell them who in the community “does” access. The pols should be individually invited not only to

appear on access programming, but to produce access programs about their roles in the community. The outgoing nature of the typical politician makes him or her a perfect access user.

A POLITICAL PARABLE

What I shall describe next is a hypothetical example of what can happen in an American community when the politics of access are not played in a positive manner. It is presented as a narrative, and I repeat for clarity the disclaimer that it is hypothetical.

In a small town somewhere in the suburbs there was only one molder of public opinion before the arrival of cable television. That opinion-maker was the town's weekly newspaper. It was perhaps a typical small town paper, whose virtues were limited to its coverage of local events and its ads for local merchants.

This paper tended to editorially, and through its gossip column, villify everything and everyone in the town with whom its editor did not agree. More importantly, there was no way for the objects of its villification to respond, except through the paper's tightly-controlled “Letters to the Editor” column. The citizens of the community generally went along with the paper's views simply because they were not privy to an alternate point of view, publicly disseminated.

The local elected (or would-be elected) officials in the community developed a pragmatic, symbiotic relationship with the paper. They learned early on that if the paper editorialized against them, it would

Continued on Next Page

be very difficult for them to be elected or re-elected to public office. The pols therefore tended to pander to the paper and its editor regarding their political positions.

Enter newly-franchised cable television, replete with a public access channel. This channel had a new access manager, and a new access Board, who just naturally assumed that the town officials and the town paper were going to be pro-access. After all, had not the pols and the paper been very positive during the franchise process? Had not the City Council made it clear that the access corporation which they themselves had created out of a city committee would be held at an "arm's length" relationship from the city to prevent politicization?

Were they "for" access? Well, yes and no. Consider the circumstances.

The access Board had, on their own, hired an eminently-qualified access manager. Although this was their right under their official agreements with the City and cable company, protocol (read politics) really called for them to submit the name to the City Council for approval. The City felt, but did not so tell the Board, that because its pass-through of part of the franchise fee to fund access were city funds, any major expenditure required at least their tacit approval. The naive access Board members felt that their integrity to hire whomever they wished, or purchase whatever they needed, was sacrosanct and clearly covered by the "arms-length" understanding. Nobody told them they had to clear such things with the City.

The newspaper, ambivalently supportive of the pols and also concerned about its monopoly upon town public opinion, therefore refused to publicize access programs. Nor would it publish the access program schedule or list access meetings, although every other organizational meeting in town was noted.

To make this equation even more complex, some City Council members had an additional problem with access. Some had been in office for many terms. Some had made decisions or spent public monies in what might be considered questionable ways. There had been no questions about these things which were able to surface; no open opposition, because the local newspaper told only their side of the story.

Local government often works best for the governors when it works in the dark. But wait! Here comes this access channel which just *might* shed light on both the past and the future. This upstart community channel was planning to do live call-in talk shows. What should the pols do?

Why, kill the access channel of course, if they could.

From out of the blue, then, the gauntlet was thrown. While access was young, naive, suffering growing pains and relatively helpless in a PR sense, a member of City Council, on the front page of the newspaper, excoriated the access organization and its manager for "not covering an event of local importance at the town community center." Of course, and needless to say, the access group had not been asked to cover the event. And even if it were, it was explained to the councilman, that's not how access works. Community television is not NBC!

No matter the explanation, the pol's outburst was followed up with an editorial in the next issue of the paper, agreeing with the councilman and decrying the ineptitude of the access organization and its manager. The Executive Director, according to the paper, should have hauled out the equipment and covered the event himself if necessary!

A member of the access Board wrote a patient and explanatory letter to the editor, it was published in a later edition, and the furor seemingly died. Alas, not so, for within a few weeks, the very same councilman called on his colleagues to rescind the City proclamation which had brought access into being, created the basis for an access corporation, and provided its funding. This funding, a portion of the franchise fee, was the only major source of revenue available to support access.

A major effort by the access corporation, including taping of that council session and a presentation by the access Board president before an access-user-packed council chamber, sidetracked the councilman's attempt at defunding. One suspects too that the Council's attorney entered the picture by quietly advising that defunding, without prior proof of malfeasance, could run counter to the Cable Policy Act of 1984 and might be seen as direct censorship of the access channel by the city.

Week after week thereafter, the front page of the newspaper, as well as its gossip column, carried both innuendo and outright lies concerning the access corporation and its Director, to the point where more effort was expended in fighting the political battle than on building access in the community.

The city council responded to the furor by withholding half of the access corporation's funding for one year, ostensibly to purchase needed access equipment. Later, the same city councilman mentioned ear-

lier averred in Council session that he believed the access facility was underused. He wondered aloud whether the city ought to spend its funds on a facility that its citizenry did not use.

The thrust of the city council actions, and the newspaper's attacks, were to clearly impress on the access Board just Who Was Boss, who indeed controlled the purse strings, who was going to call the shots. This impression was indelibly made and the Board wondered among themselves just how they were going to get out of their dilemma.

Salvation came when the politically unacceptable access manager submitted a token resignation. It was in protest of particular Board policies encroaching on his integrity, and it was accepted immediately. The Board had seen the light and had succumbed to the political pressure. It advertised for candidates for the job, and the names of all the new applicants were submitted to the City Manager, the cable company and even the newspaper for approval.

The approved, anointed and sanitized candidate was chosen even though that candidate had absolutely no background in communications, certainly none in community television. Almost immediately, the local paper provided a half-page for a weekly column about access by a Board member, and the City Council beamed their approval. All was now right with the world.

Now lest the reader conclude that the original access manager was treated badly, that is not the case at all, nor is it the moral of the story. That would be a "sour grapes" conclusion, were the writer of this tale and the manager the same person. The more apt conclusion is that *you must play the political game or be lost in the process*. What's more, you must play the game almost by instinct.

Is that a morally just conclusion? Perhaps not. Is it a pragmatically necessary conclusion? I believe very much that it is! The value of public access to the community which you and I share, must be the overriding factor in its preservation.

Bob Oringel is a Maryland-based video engineer and author.

PUBLIC POLICY: It's Time For States To Regulate Uses Of Franchise Fees

By Tom Karwin

During the past ten years, we have begun to see rapid growth in public, educational and governmental (PEG) access to local cable systems. More than 1,200 communities have learned that cable communications technology offers significant non-commercial benefits. Nevertheless, access' growth has been hindered significantly by the lack of sufficient and consistent operating resources. (Imagine what could happen *with* such resources!) This article summarizes current issues related to uses of revenues from cable franchise fees — the most important single source of operating support for access and other cable-related purposes.

ACCESS AS A POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Cable Communications Policy Act (1984) provides clear policy support for PEG access. The Cable Act's Section 611 authorizes franchising authorities to require the dedication of channels for access, and establish rules and regulations governing uses of those channels. Also, the Cable Act's Section 622 excludes payments for PEG access required in existing franchise agreements, and capitals costs for PEG access required in future agreements, from its definition of franchise fees. In addition, the Cable Act's record of legislative intent includes the following strong endorsement of PEG access:

... a requirement of reasonable third-party access to cable systems will mean a wide diversity of information sources for the public — the fundamental goal of the First Amendment — without the need to regulate the content of programming provided over cable. . . . Public access channels are often the video equivalent of the speaker's soap box or the electronic parallel to the printed leaflet. They provide groups and individuals who generally have not had access to the electronic media with the opportunity to become sources of information in the marketplace of ideas. PEG channels also contribute to an informed citizenry by bringing local schools into the

home, and by showing the public local government at work. (Committee, p.30)

FRANCHISE FEES AS SUPPORT FOR ACCESS

The Cable Act also authorizes franchising authorities to charge a cable franchise fee of up to five percent of a cable operator's gross revenues. The use of the revenues from these fees to support PEG access would recognize Congress' view that PEG access advances "the fundamental goal of the First Amendment." It also clearly would follow the earlier (1972-84) policy of the Federal Communications Commission that a portion of cable franchise fee revenues must be used only for cable-related purposes (FCC, 1984). Ciamporero, Geller & Lampert (1986, pp. 31-32) note that franchisors are authorized to impose a franchise fee to support access activities, and point out that access channels further two of the Cable Act's purposes; assuring that cable systems are responsive to the needs and interests of the local community, and that they provide the widest possible diversity of information sources and services to the public. The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers also "supports the use of franchise fees for cable-related purposes" (NFLCP, 1985).

FRANCHISE FEES AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL TAXES

Several legal scholars have concluded that revenues from a cable franchise fee can only be used for cable-related purposes. When used for general revenue purposes, it can be argued that the cable franchise fee becomes an improper tax on the cable operator's exercise of First Amendment rights. Meyerson (1985), for example argues as follows:

... a franchise fee, in order to be constitutional, must be used to operate the cable system. Examples of these uses are enforcement of franchise obligations, research and development for a long-term

telecommunications policy, and funding of public, educational and governmental channels, facilities, and equipment. (p. 560)

Similarly, Ciamporero, Geller & Lampert (1986) analyze several legal precedents to reach their conclusion that the Constitution requires cable franchise fees to be used for cable-related purposes:

A special tax on a First Amendment speaker is unconstitutional unless necessary to achieve an overriding governmental interest of compelling importance, and the raising of general revenue is clearly not sufficient to justify such a special tax. (p. 20)

PASSING THE BUCK

Given these public policy and legal perspectives, it might seem that access advocates could succeed easily in their efforts to secure allocations from local cable franchise fee revenues for the support of local access activities. Unfortunately, it's not that simple.

The Cable Act eliminates the FCC's long-standing regulatory policy on the use of funds derived from cable franchise fees, omits any statutory guidelines to replace those regulations, and prohibits any future federal regulation of the franchisor's use of these funds. It also prohibits franchisors from requiring cable operators to make monetary payments beyond the maximum franchise fee, for the support of PEG access or other purposes.

We cannot expect Congress to revisit the Cable Act's provisions regarding the franchise fee, simply because "a deal is a deal." The Cable Act's lack of guidelines for uses of franchise fee revenues, and its prohibition of federal regulation of those uses, resulted from the lobbying by the National League of Cities, and not from any broad commitment to good public policy. The League steadfastly insisted that franchise fees are rental charges for the use of public rights-of-way, and that the Federal government should not dictate local uses of the revenues derived from those fees. Accordingly, the Cable Act's compromise position includes Federal regula-

tion of the maximum amount of the franchise fee, and prohibits Federal regulation of the "manner in which the income from such fees may be spent" (Committee, 1984, p. 26).

Thus, Congress delegated to the states the authority and responsibility to regulate uses of revenues from cable franchise fees, and provide operating support for access. The states, in turn, delegated the vast majority of this authority and responsibility to local franchising authorities.

FRANCHISE FEES AS RENTAL CHARGES

Local franchisors typically insist that cable franchise fees are not taxes at all, but rather rental charges for the cable operator's uses of the publicly-owned rights of way. Unlike most rental charges, which are flat rates reflecting current supply and demand in the local market, the cable franchise fee is an "economic rent," which is linked to the cable operator's gross revenues, generated by uses of the rights of way.

If the franchise fee is perceived as a rental charge for the use of public facilities, and not a tax, the rental income surely can be used as a source of general revenues, without threatening the cable operator's First Amendment rights. As attorney Nick Miller has noted, "few would challenge a five percent rent on the *Washington Post* if it chose to build its printing plant on an industrial park created by municipal bonds" (Boehm, 1986). As we shall see, however, that view is deeply flawed.

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION

These differences might have to be resolved by the courts. That would indicate a failure of government, at all levels, to deal forthrightly with obvious needs and Constitutional interests. Since this issue involves the implementation of established public policy, legislative action clearly would be more appropriate. It remains to consider whether state or local governments should be responsible for this needed action.

As indicated above, local governments have resisted any earmarking of cable franchise fees, and insisted on treating them as general revenues. This means that local government allocations in support of access are made annually (if at all) from general revenues, and that the budgetary

needs of access must compete with all other municipal priorities, without regard to the public policy and legal considerations outlined above. Even in those few cities which recognize and respect the policy objectives of access, this annual process leads to funding uncertainties, and even invites an indirect, after-the-fact form of censorship of access programming. These local decisions on access funding also result inevitably in different levels of funding from one community to another. This suggests that the Cable Act's policy objectives do not apply uniformly in all communities, and to all individuals! This situation clearly is unacceptable.

When local governments, operating under state laws, divert franchise fee revenues to municipal purposes which are unrelated to cable communications, they abridge their citizens' First Amendment rights. Similarly, when local governments allocate markedly different percentages of these revenues to PEG access, they deny their citizens' right to equal protection under the law. It could be argued, therefore, that a state law that permits local governments to determine uses of cable franchise fee revenues without reference to Constitutional criteria, stands as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. This analysis returns to the state governments the responsibility to regulate uses of cable franchise fee revenues.

A MODEL FOR STATE REGULATION OF USES OF CABLE FRANCHISE FEES

First of all, state legislators must resist any temptation to assess a portion of local cable franchise fees for a "statewide program fund" like that proposed by Wirth (1984), or other state activities related to PEG access. Such arrangements would be unnecessary and improper limitations of the local community's discretion, and contrary to NFLCP's advocacy of uniquely local programming and community control of access resources (NFLCP, 1985). Local communities should remain free to collaborate in regional or statewide access activities, if they wish to do so. State legislators might well determine, however, that state-level cable franchise regulation and consumer protection would be cost-effective for the smaller communities and cable systems, and should be funded with a portion of local franchise fees. In this case, local franchisors should retain the option

to either contract with a state agency to provide such service, or meet state guidelines through a local regulatory program.

A key consideration in state legislation should be the local governments' claims that they are entitled to some general revenue in return for the cable operators' use of publicly-owned rights-of-way. Access advocates, too, should acknowledge the legitimacy of that claim. The question, of course, is the amount of such general revenue which should be considered "reasonable and appropriate." A useful precedent exists in California's Public Utilities Code, which provides that a municipality may charge private gas, electric and water utilities a franchise fee of no less than one and no greater than two percent of gross revenues for their uses of streets and other public property.

Similar provisions probably exist in other states' utility codes. Since a cable system's uses of public rights-of-way clearly involves no greater impacts than those of other utilities, this provision could serve as a standard of reasonableness for a municipality's rental charges to cable operators.

State legislation should also *require* local franchisors to impose cable franchise fees of five percent of a cable operator's gross revenues, as soon as may be possible under the Cable Act. The rationale for this requirement is that urgent needs exist for more effective regulation of cable franchises and protection of cable consumers, and support of access, and that the cable franchise fee is the appropriate source of support.

Local arrangements which would postpone compliance with this requirement, or reduce franchise fees under specified circumstances, would compromise the pursuit of the Constitutional goals at issue and should not be permitted. Local arrangements to reduce franchise fees on the presumption that this action would reduce the cable subscribers' costs would be quite naive, and also should not be permitted.

State legislators also should establish guidelines which define Constitutionally-permissible uses of the remainder of local cable franchise fee revenues. These guidelines might focus simply on "purposes which are related to cable communications." This approach, however, might authorize various forms of mischief, such as subsidizing the franchisor's voice or data communications or telecommunications planning. Local governments might be well advised to update their communications, but a Constitutional challenge such

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THE COMMUNITY VIDEOT — A Resource Of Technical Tips

By Dave Bloch

This issue, we've got a few good quick ideas for portable and mobile productions, and then an easy-to-make box that will let you do high tech chroma key-like effects with only a single camera!

CABLE TRICKS

Dennis Speer at the University of California-Santa Cruz may have discovered the ultimate cable tie. His staff cuts 1-inch-wide strips out of old car tire inner tubes, and ties one near one end of each cable. After a cable is coiled, the user wraps the strap around it and ties a simple overhand knot — the high friction of the rubber keeps it in place, but the knot stays easy to untie. The trick works for video, audio, and even power cables.

Mike Brown at Sacramento Cable has another innertube trick — he slips a short length of skinny bicycle tire tube over the expensive connectors on the ends of the camera cables in their mobile van. Taped onto the cable, the tubes protect the connectors from being dragged across the ground, and are easily peeled back for use.

Finally, the Sacramento folks have also come up with an answer to people damaging camera cables by stepping on them. They saw six-foot lengths of 3-inch PVC plastic pipe in half lengthwise, forming a hard "tunnel" that they lay over the cables when going on mobile shoots. A few pieces of gaffer's tape holds the pipe to the floor. The pipe offers much better protection to the cables than just taping, is easier to remove, and is light and very cheap.

MAKING A BEAMSPLITTER BOX

(This idea is adapted from *The Video Effects Notebook*, Copyright 1986 by Jack Imes, Jr. of Rochester, Michigan. Used by permission.)

I wish I could show you the kinds of effects possible with this little box — still pictures just don't do it justice. Just build it and experiment!

1. Make an 8-inch cube out of wood or strong cardboard.

2. On two adjacent sides, cut out a 4-inch by 5-inch rectangle. These will be the "Art" sides.

3. On the third side, cut out a 7-inch square. This is the "Camera" side.

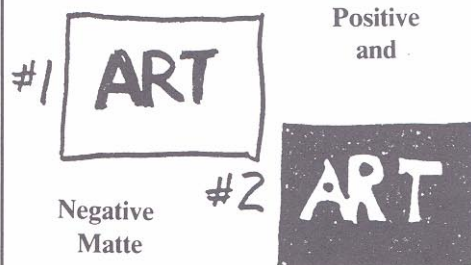
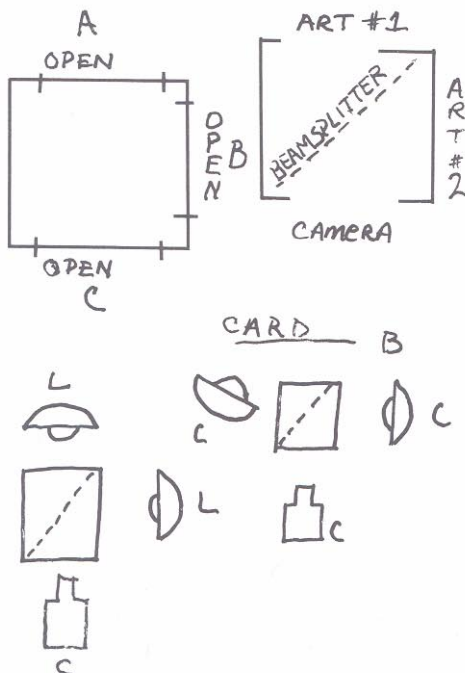
4. Make the inside of the cube jet black — use paint, or marker, or cover the surfaces with black paper or cardboard.

5. The beamsplitter itself is a partially-silvered mirror. Make it by covering a thin sheet of glass, 11-1/4-inch by 7-1/4-inch, with plastic "Sun Screen." This is the adhesive-backed silvery material used to reduce glare on windows — you can buy it by the foot at most large hardware stores. Apply the material carefully — there must be no bubbles or wrinkles in it.

6. Position the beamsplitter in the box, corner-to-corner, as shown in the drawing. Make sure the silvered side of the glass faces the Camera side of the box.

7. Put the top on the box, just taping it on lightly.

8. That completes the construction. After trying it, you might want to add some spring-type clips or other methods of fastening your art over the openings — for now, just use tape.



USING THE BEAMSPLITTER

Your art should be done on clear acetate film (like the material used on overhead projectors) using rub-on or stick-on letters, or certain opaque inks. Have a printing shop make a negative of this for you (usually just a minimal charge), or buy some sheets of Kodalith film and developer and do this yourself. Now you will have a sheet of film with clear lettering on an opaque background.

Tape the negative to a 5-by-6-inch piece of glass, and fasten this over one of the Art openings — the one opposite the camera. Point a small light at the artwork, and center it so it looks right on the camera monitor.

Next, fasten the positive art over the other Art opening and point a light at it. Position the artwork carefully so that, in the monitor, you see the black letters superimposed exactly over the letters on the negative.

Now you can begin playing with the effects. Dimming the lights (or moving them around), placing colored gels (report cover plastic is fine) in front of them, or bouncing them off reflective objects (crinkled foil-covered cardboard, for example), will all give different images. Any of these may be put in motion, or moved in and out of the light, to create dynamic effects.

One word of caution: to avoid blinding the camera tube be sure to use low-power lights, and turn them off before removing your artwork.

Dave Bloch is Managing Editor of Community Television Review, based in Sacramento, California.

Getting Together A Set — Part 2

By John Glaeser

In the last issue of CTR, WHA-TV's John Glaeser explained the processes behind planning and constructing an effective set for video productions. This time, Mr. Glaeser gives the details for painting and decorating the set.

PREPARING TO PAINT

Once the set is designed and the set pieces built, it's time to transfer your design artwork from the drawing board. An overhead transparency projector or an opaque projector are handy tools for enlarging designs onto backgrounds or set pieces. Using press-on or rub-on lettering, freehand drawings, photos or collage arrangements as a beginning point, one can make designs that fit the 8-inch by 10-inch projection glass of the projector. This original design can then be projected onto a large surface and traced out, later to be filled in with colors.

If you are painting complex designs from a projection you will want to purchase a collection of artists' brushes. A round furrowed brush having a chisel-tipped flat edge of about 1/4-inch is good for controlled lines and edging, while a larger flat furrowed one with a one-inch or larger flat edge works well for filling in large areas with paint. Very large areas can be covered using a paint roller.

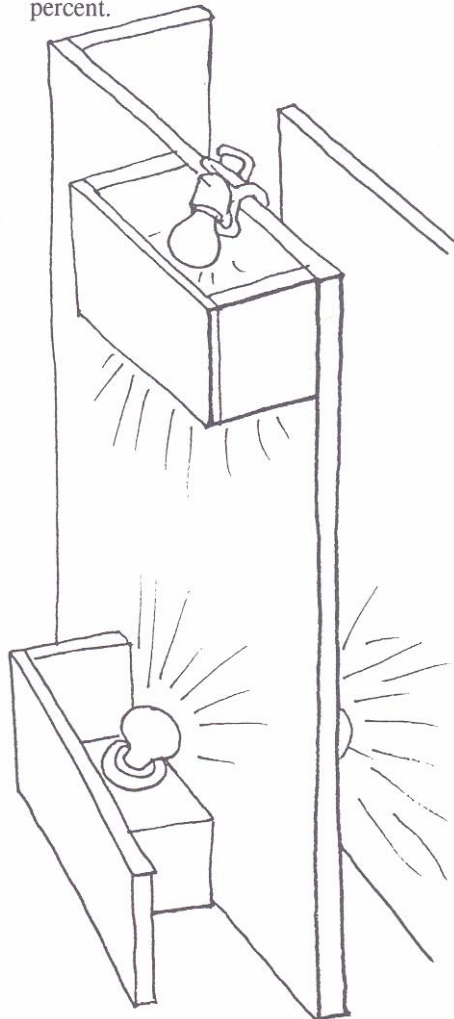
When getting ready to paint your set, two approaches can be considered. One is to have an inventory of scenic paints on hand which allows you to mix and blend your own colors. Scenic paints are generally latex based, though some casein varieties are available. They come in basic, deep-toned primary colors, plus earth tones and black and white.

If your paint needs are infrequent and you don't want to be tied up with lots of inventory, it may be best to have your paint store do special mixes for you. You can make your selections from the color chips at the store.

SELECTING THE COLORS

Selecting colors with tonal values that

work well on television is a challenge. The main limitation is that color television can only handle a tonal range (that is, the range from light to dark) of about 20 to 1. "TV White" is actually only 60 percent reflectance — the surface only reflects back about 60 percent of the light striking it. "TV Black" has a reflectance of about 3 percent.



EXPERIMENT WITH INDIRECT LIGHTING IDEAS USING 100 WATT FLOOD OR SPOTLIGHTS TO CREATE SUBTLE LIGHTING ACCENTS.

Video equipment contains internal controls which prevent an overly-bright image from being transmitted. Excessive brightness is clipped off to the maximum acceptable level, eliminating the descriptive

details in the lighter shades. For instance, a brightly-lighted white shirt in relation to a dark background will become a flat white shape with no indication of folds or shadows. Details in the darker areas will also be lost as the tonal range is compressed to fall within acceptable limitations. The separation between tonal steps is reduced, and the picture looks muddy and flat.

The most convenient way of avoiding distortions of this kind is to think of the setting as being supportive of the action going on in front of it. A middle tone with a variation of three or four values is the most trouble free. To give a "snap" to this limited range of tone, small amounts of black in the forms of shadow edging, texture or descriptive lines can be added for emphasis. Small bits of white may be used for accents.

Picking colors that provide this range can be difficult. To help with this process, we use a *Fiorentino Color Contrast Evaluator*. It consists of a dark piece of glass that polarizes out the color of objects, and when used with the accompanying collection of gray value chips we can determine the relative tonal value of particular color samples. In addition to being handy for mixing colors, this tool is good for checking fabrics and other materials.

The middle-toned set is welcomed by the lighting designer, because it provides the maximum possibility to effect a wide range of tonal accents by adjusting light levels. For dramatic interest, some parts of the background can be easily brightened with a little more light, while others can fall off to near black by reducing the light.

Also, lighting a wide range of skin colors is easier to accomplish against a middle-tone background. A light background behind a dark skin exaggerates the difference — the background seems to come forward visually and the tonal values of the face get even darker. If the contrast is greater than 20 to 1, the tonal values compress so that the face becomes a dark hole. A dark background behind a fair-skinned person works, but add a dark-skinned person to the scene and the newcomer will

Continued on Page 28

Set, Part II...

Continued from Page 27

blend into the background. A middle-toned set, on the other hand, enhances both dark and fair skin tones, in any combination.

Note that bright backgrounds, or areas of the background, will compete visually with a foreground subject. Wherever the greatest contrast exists is where the eye goes first. Unless this is according to a consciously-designed effect, it draws attention away from the more important aspects of the scene.

Large masses of very dark or very light areas in a single background can lead to aesthetic distortions, as can be seen by a person walking from a dark to a light background. You can expect to see the face tones change from light to dark. Unless this is the intended dramatic effect, it can look strange. In fact, a very dark background may cause serious video distortion in the form of horizontal streaking.

So, how do you get colors that have the desired middle values, and that will complement the skin tones of your on-camera talent? Here are some characteristics of different colors:

—Pure blue and green are on the dark side, but either can be lightened by adding white. Red is a mid-tone, and may be lightened with white. Yellow has almost the value of white, and cannot be darkened without shifting in hue — it tends to turn greenish or brownish.

—Warm colors like yellow, orange or red visually come forward, while the cool colors (green, blue, purple) visually recede.

—Red feels aggressive; blue feels restful.

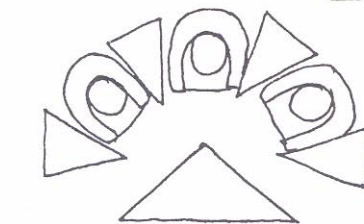
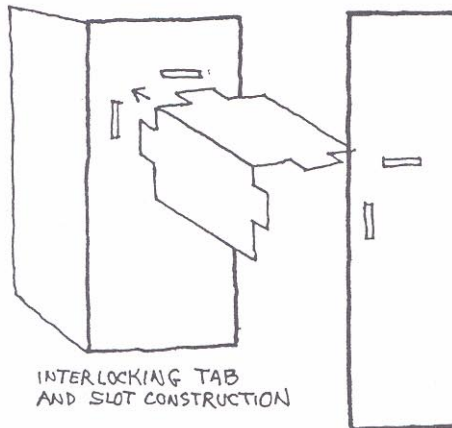
—A full background of red or orange makes the flesh tones look gray and sickly. Blue as a full background tends to complement the yellow and red elements in flesh tones, which are then enhanced.

Generally, a neutral background is a safe starting point. A gray or muted blue or brown background can be selectively accented by using colored gels in some of the background lights.

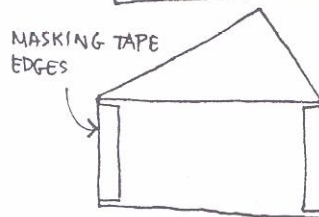
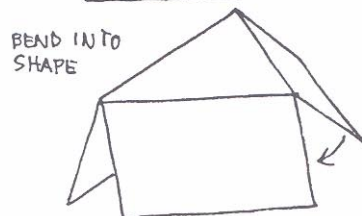
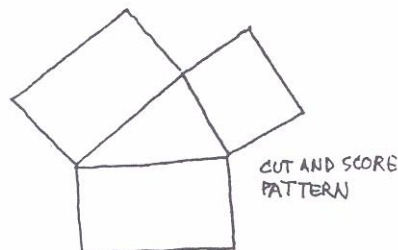
SOME FINAL POINTS

A variety of textures will add interest to the television image. Textures range from the smoothness of formica and painted wood to texturized paint, fabric and carpeting. Some texture is very large, such as the breakup of architectural space with wall jogs, doors or bas-relief patterns.

Smooth textures may cause serious reflection problems. A typical example is a group seated around a table. The horizontal surface catches a lot of light, reflecting it directly into the camera lens. Such a sur-



SIDE TABLE AND COFFEE TABLE
CARD BOARD WEDGE SYSTEM



PAINT DARK COLOR
TO CONCEAL JOINERY

face can be covered with a piece of felt or other fabric. A neutral dark gray would work well for this purpose, or a muted blue or brown. Remember that light reflecting off of this fabric on to the talent's faces will

take on the color of the fabric, so avoid selecting bright colors for this purpose.

The smaller a detail to be seen, the lighter in tone it should be. Light details reflect light, which makes them come forward. Outlining such details with a thin black line will cause them to jump out even more.

In designing for television's electronic eye, a good starting point is the use of three or four mid-tone values accented with bits of highlighting "near white" and emphasized through elements of black. The selective use of bright and dark components give sparkle and strength to the total look.

A brief overview of what is involved in set design can touch on a few points like the importance of the narrative treatment, knowing the studio environment, working with the scale model, being familiar with the nature of materials, techniques and design principles. An individual's enthusiasm and curiosity coupled with opportunities to learn from others and to actually make set designs is the optimum circumstance for continuing growth in this field.

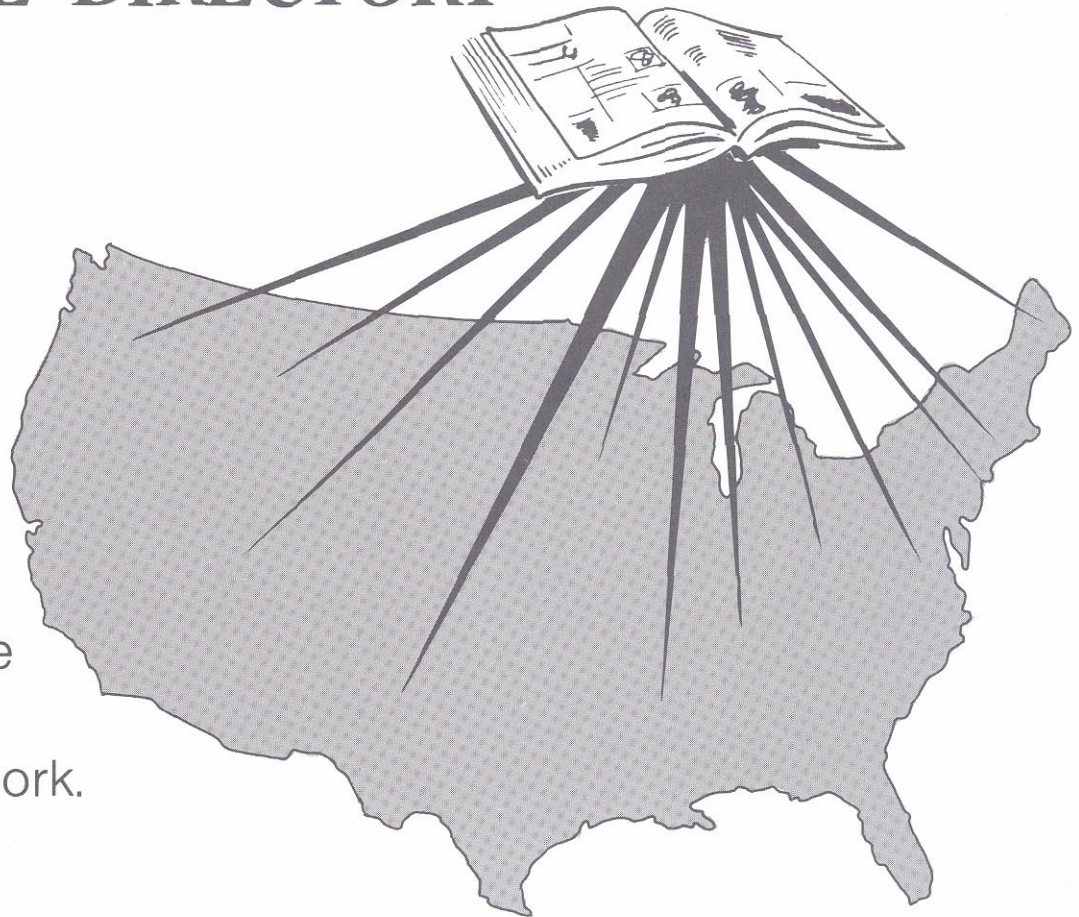
John Glaeser is Scenic Designer for WHA-TV, University of Wisconsin-Extension, in Madison. CTR readers with set design questions may call John at (608) 263-4543.

Errata: Part I of this article appeared in CTR Volume 9 Number 3. In the table accompanying the article, the editor mistakenly wrote that polystyrene sheets cut easily with a knife. The entry should read that polystyrene should be cut using a sabre saw with a knife blade attachment. Also, note that this material may be painted with water-based paints without warping. — Ed.

... *CABLE PROGRAMMING RESOURCE DIRECTORY*

NEW from NFLCP.

This amazing book will plug you into the nationwide cable programming information network.



Five Major Sections

Cable Programming Centers

This section contains **1,100** locations which produce access and local origination programming. This section is designed for easy and quick reference. It contains—

- names, addresses and telephone numbers
- type of management entity
- type of programming (i.e., public access, local origination, etc.)
- annual operating budget
- value of video production equipment
- number and types of channels
- number of staff members
- number of volunteers
- type of training offered
- number of studios
- videotape formats used
- hours per week of programming
- plus Much More

Analysis of Information About Community Programming Centers

This section provides detailed charts and tables which provide valuable comparisons of information included in the C.P.C. section. Narrative paragraphs explain local cable programming trends.

Free and Low-Cost Programming

This section is divided into two subsections: full-length programs and public service announcements. It provides a comprehensive, descriptive listing of organizations, government agencies, associations and corporations which have free or low-cost programming.

Satellite Services Directory

This section provides a unique and up-to-date look at cable satellite services. It includes—

- name and description of service
- contact person, address and telephone number
- type of service (i.e., Basic, Pay, etc.)
- number of subscribers
- number of programming hours per day
- policy regarding acquisition of independent programming
- percentage of total programming from independent producers

International Programming Sources

This section contains a listing of programming sources by country. It was compiled by Columbus Community Cable Access in Columbus, Ohio.

Who's Out There??

By Frank R. Jamison

Research Clearinghouse

Western Michigan University, in cooperation with the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, has established a clearinghouse for community programming audience research. WMU seeks copies of all research results that measure viewership on public, educational, and governmental access channels; as well as leased access and local origination services. Please send any such material to the address below.

In addition, WMU has developed a model research instrument that measures most conventional categories of community viewership as well as the key element of the economic relationship between community channels and the marketability of cable in the local service area. This model instrument is available without cost by writing to the address below. While designed for a telephone survey approach, it can be readily adapted to a mail-out or direct interview format. The model instrument was developed by media research experts at Western Michigan University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, CBS Video, and Michigan State University, and has been endorsed by the NFLCP staff and Board of Directors. Although the instrument has now been administered by several cities, a larger sampling from cities of all sizes and geographic areas is needed to form a statistically-valid picture of viewership and the economic impact of community programming. Please contact the author for information and assistance if you are considering research:

Prof. Frank R. Jamison
Head of Media Services
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5001
(616) 383-4927

So, I'm sittin' in my office on this Thursday afternoon trying to figure how I can get the weekend to materialize sooner — that is, if I get a weekend at all this weekend. The engineer on duty has just let me know that the backup editing suite

took a direct hit from the lightning storm that's making its way across the state and will be out for heaven knows how long, the instructor for the basic studio class phoned in with the flu, we're running low on videotape stock and the sales rep won't even answer my phone calls, the repair shop says it'll be another two weeks to finish dealing with the damage to our switcher after coffee was spilled in it a month ago, and three cable subscribers are calling *me* to complain that the premium channel they watched intently all last evening was disgustingly obscene and what was *I* going to do about it; when in walks this guy who wants to know when we are going to do some really *meaningful* audience research. Somehow, all I can think of is my concept of a people meter strapped to the belt of my bathrobe as I caught a few minutes on the tube last night before collapsing; then an image of the signals from it being fed into some giant computer in New Jersey so that my rapid eye movement can become part of a valid sampling of couch potatoes across America.

Well, I tell him access is somehow too precious and unique to contend with that kind of high-roller stuff and I want no part of it. Nope, standard research that puts the spotlight on numbers and cost-per-thousand just doesn't work for access, I say. Remember, we're dealing with a movement here, a special kind of TV, not another way to sell Fords — and it came right out of a concept called "narrowcasting." Oh sure, it has grown. We even look slick now and then. Some would say we are more "viewable," but let's not get trapped in the idea of going head-to-head with the networks and movie services. They are different from us and thank goodness for that! Listen, if we wanted to run another PBS — you know, culture for the masses stuff — we'd get slaughtered.

They are already doing that job and with budgets we can't touch. For my money, we had better stick to the philosophy of bottom-up programming initiative. Let's help the community talk to itself. Let's provide that one thing that the big guys,

because they *are* big, can't provide: local programming. And if we are going to do that, let's find out how we are making a unique contribution to *local* cable services. For starters, instead of bickering with cable owners and management, *let's show them how valuable we are to them.*

Now around the access center here, I am perfectly happy talking about media diversity, First Amendment protections, alternate program formats *and* audiences, even narrowcasting. That's the stuff that keeps me going. I believe in it with a passion, but, for our own sake, let's talk to the cable operator in terms he's more familiar with. Let's talk economics!

So I tell this guy that if he wants to talk about audience research in this town, do it so that I can show those owners and managers that we *matter* to them. I have always secretly thought that we were among their strongest assets. Access is the only local service on many cable systems; and when the home VCR, videodisc, direct satellite broadcasting and all the others begin nipping at their heels we look pretty good all of a sudden — and we make them look good to current and *new* subscribers. It has always amazed me that they did not use the availability of our channels when they market the system, but then *maybe* we haven't told them the story in a way they can use.

So OK, we develop research that not only lets us know some things about viewership so we can make better decisions, but we also throw in some questions about what sort of *value* people place on the community cable services we provide. Now, we've got to play fair — no designing the research just to get the answers we want. But that is easy enough to avoid with some thought. The answers we get might not be earthshaking, but are still important. For example, research by an access center in our region showed that 13 percent of the cable households said they should pay less for cable if access were no longer available to them. Now, 13 percent may not sound like much, but the estimated loss in revenue over the fifteen years of the franchise amounted to well over six

million dollars! That's not a "hard figure," as the Wall Street boys would say, but what cable company would fail to understand the importance of that kind of income and the goodwill value of access?

That is the kind of research that does us all some good, I say. Sure, you get to confirm your gut instincts about which programs get the most viewer attention — city council, local sports, general government programs, the arts, maybe even belly dancing — but remember that viewership numbers aren't even the best reason for deciding what value you are going to place on program offerings. In fact, mostly I don't think about the specific merits of

program content. Leave that to the viewer! But when we talk to the cable company, we had better be able to show that those franchise fees are offset by dollars back in their pocket from satisfied subscribers. You know, I think we can do it, too. Let's do some audience research; but as long as we are going to all that work, let's be sure we get everything we can out of it.

So I looked at this guy sort of cautiously from the corner of my eye figuring on an argument, but he says I took the words right out of his mouth. Could've knocked me over with a feather! Well, I figured that if he's that kind of guy, maybe he could get me some videotape. He said that was a bit

out of his line, but that *if* I wanted to do this audience research he could probably connect me with a local college or university class that could help; and he figured the costs of printing survey response forms, telephone calls and computer time could probably be underwritten as well.

I figured one more question ought to just about do it, so I asked this guy if he could help me with my weekend problem. He just looked at me kinda funny and walked out.

Frank R. Jamison is Professor of Academic Services and Head of Media Services at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

Report On Community Channel Performance

By Robert LaRose, PhD., and Maria Babakitis

Recent regulatory changes in the cable television industry are forcing community programmers to become more accountable for the resources that are used for community programming and for the performance of public, educational and government (PEG) access channels. Community programmers are being asked to justify their efforts — and even their existence — using the same criteria that are applied to other forms of cable programming. Community programming advocates across the country are beginning to respond to these pressures by conducting their own audience surveys and developing other sources of information to demonstrate the value of their efforts.

In this environment, there is a need to develop objective standards of performance for community channels and to evaluate the current performance of community programming in individual communities. In this way, it is possible to objectively determine which PEG channels are doing a good job and which are not, and to identify opportunities for improvement. The purpose of this article is to examine the performance of community channels in the United States today and some recent trends in terms of awareness, interest, viewership and viewer satisfaction. Additional findings on the utilization and funding of access production facilities are also discussed.

The results presented here are based on a quarterly national survey of homes

passed by cable in the United States. This survey, known as the *CableMark Probe*, has been conducted quarterly by the ELRA Group of San Francisco since 1982. Each quarter, 1,000 homes in cabled areas are interviewed by telephone to establish awareness, viewership and satisfaction levels for over thirty programming services. Community and access channels have been included in this survey for the past two years. Respondents are drawn from 100 cable systems throughout the country. Both the head of the household and a randomly selected household member age 12 or older are interviewed in each home contacted.

VIEWSHIP AND AWARENESS

The most recent survey showed that approximately three-fifths (59 per cent) of all homes passed by cable are served by at least one community channel. About a third (35 per cent) of cable viewers age 12 or older who have these channels available to them have ever watched them, although nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) are aware of their existence. In the most recent survey covering the spring and summer of 1986, 15 per cent of cable viewers who have community channels available said that they had watched them in the week preceding the survey. Over a third of the weekly viewers (37 per cent) and over a quarter (28 per cent) of those who have

ever viewed said that they are very satisfied with community programming.

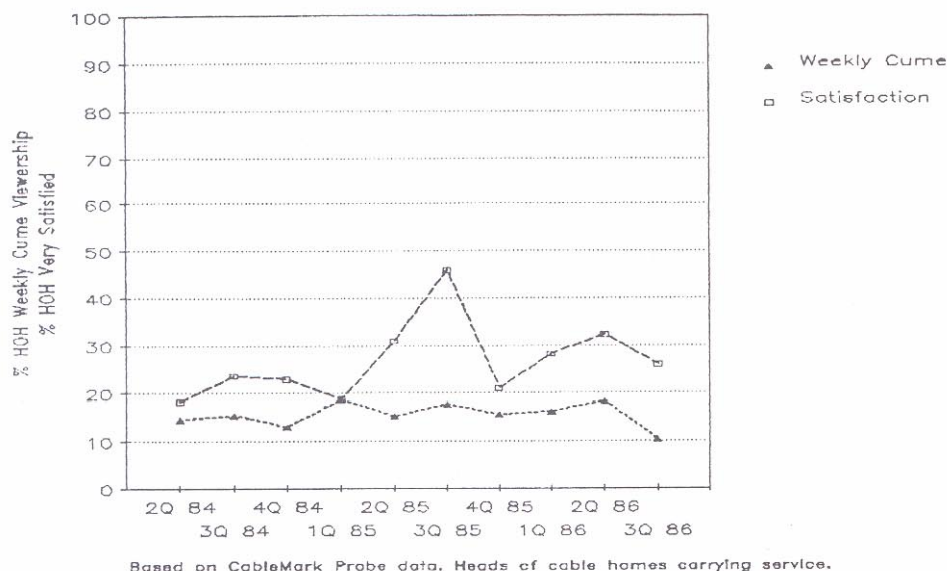
However, it should be noted that community channel performance fell dramatically in the most recent (summer) quarter. The accompanying chart shows that during the months of July, August and September, PEG channel viewership dropped to a two-year low of only 10 per cent among heads of cable households. Prior to that, weekly viewership had been holding steady at about 15 per cent for quite some time. The graph also shows that satisfaction with community programming peaked about a year ago, and has been declining among heads of cable households ever since. The availability of community channels has also declined from a high of 67 per cent (not shown).

These per centages rank far below those of the most popular forms of cable programming. For example, superstations like WGN or WTBS typically have weekly cumulative viewership levels of 60 per cent, with half of the weekly viewers very satisfied with their programming. Other popular services such as CNN, Headline News, MTV, Nashville, USA and The Weather Channel also perform substantially better than community programming.

However, community channels perform consistently better than a number of satellite-delivered channels including BET, C-SPAN, Financial News Network,

Continued on Page 32

Community and Access Channels



Performance...

Continued from Page 31

PTL and Tempo. On occasion, community programming equals the performance of Arts & Entertainment, CBN and Lifetime on one or more key indicators. It should also be noted that on some individual systems community programming does quite well indeed, sometimes placing it within the upper rank of all cable channels.

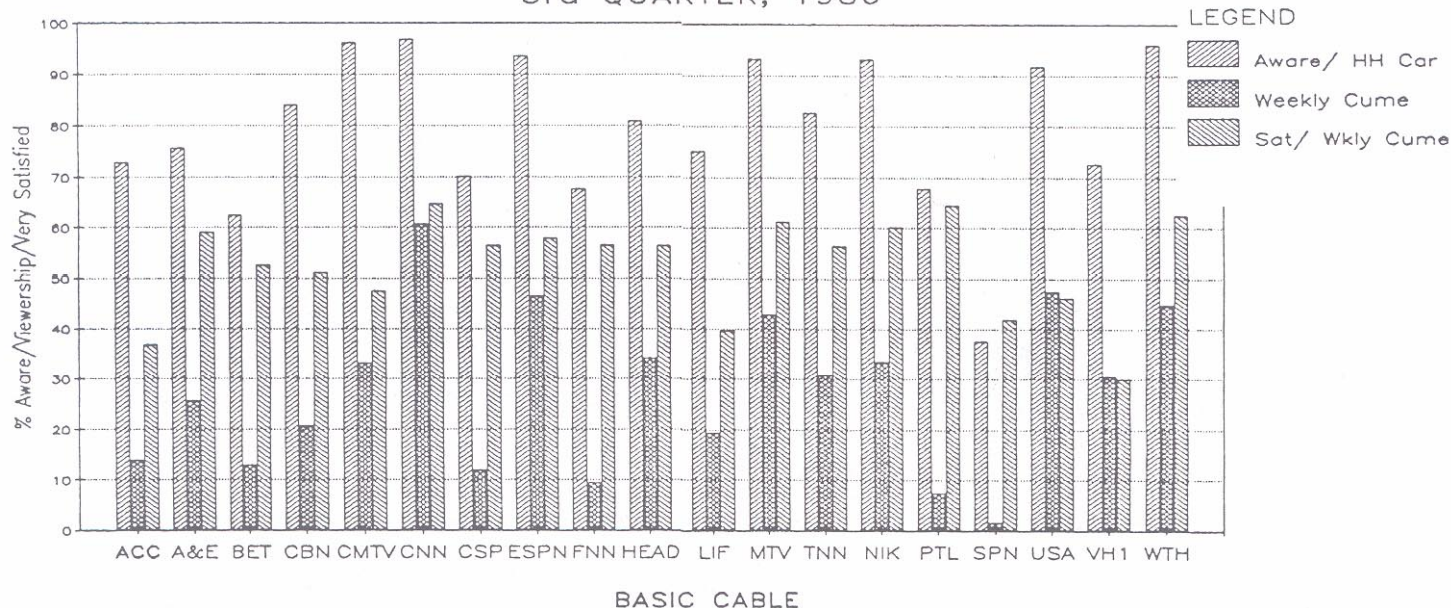
There are some audience segments where community programming does particularly well compared to the overall average. For example, weekly viewership and viewer satisfaction is considerably higher among females than males. Teenagers also tend to have higher viewership levels than average even though only about two-thirds of this audience segment are aware that their systems carry PEG channels. Young adults aged 25 to 34,

minorities, technical workers, homemakers and low-income families also have higher than average levels of satisfaction with community programming, even though their viewership levels approximately equal the national averages. PEG channels also attain better than average viewership when they are carried on systems with 24 or fewer channels.

Conversely, viewer satisfaction with community programming is very low in systems with 37 or more channels, although viewership levels in such systems are about equal to the national average. Population density has a marked negative effect on community channel performance. Residents of urban counties are half as likely to view community channels compared to the national average; urbanites who do view seldom find the community programming they see to be very satisfying.

An important barrier to community channel viewing is a lack of awareness on the part of the cable audience, when compared with other cable services. Viewer awareness of local programming is consistently among the lowest of any type of cable programming. Superstations and the pay channels typically have nearly universal viewer awareness levels while only about three-quarters of cable subscribers are aware of their PEG channels. There are a number of groups, including teens, retirees, low-income households and subscribers served by systems of over 120,000

Continued on Next Page

AWARENESS, VIEWERSHIP & SATISFACTION
3rd QUARTER, 1986

Based on CableMark Probe data. Respondents age 12+ in homes carrying service

subscribers, in which less than two-thirds are aware of the existence of their community channels.

Non-subscribers are in the dark when it comes to PEG channels. Awareness levels in non-subscribing homes are among the lowest of any type of cable programming (19 per cent aware in systems with PEG channels). This means that the availability of community programming is likely to play a relatively minor role in the decision to subscribe to cable.

COMMUNITY INTEREST

Although awareness, viewership and satisfaction levels for current community programming are somewhat low when compared with other cable services, there is still substantial interest in this type of programming. In the most recent survey, respondents were asked about their degree of interest in watching programs produced by community residents and educational institutions in their communities. Over half (54 per cent) of cable subscribers and non-subscribers are interested in watching community programming. About a fourth of these (13 per cent of all subscribers) are very interested. Interest levels such as these compare favorably with other popular cable television forms including sports, contemporary music, cultural programs, women's programs and financial information.

These results generally parallel viewership figures. For example, females are somewhat more interested in community programs than males and teens tend to show more interest than older age groups. However, there are also some groups, including older adults age 45 to 54, minorities and housewives, who have higher than average levels of interest in community programming even though their viewership levels are less than or equal to national averages. These are groups who may have unmet community programming needs. They are also groups in which there is considerable potential to expand the audience for community-produced programs.

There are also some categories of non-subscribing households that express a high level of interest in community programming. These include non-subscribers age 25 to 34, minorities and homemakers. The appeal of community programming is especially strong in minority homes. In these cases, community programming might be a positive incentive for cable

subscription — if residents were made aware of its existence!

USE OF ACCESS RESOURCES

Another dimension of community channel performance has to do with encouraging community residents to come forward and produce their own programming on access channels. In the past two years, the ELRA Group has conducted a number of surveys in individual communities which addressed this issue.

It should be stressed that the results pertaining to production needs and funding options are based on several individual community surveys which are not necessarily nationally representative. Furthermore, access programming needs may vary considerably between areas. Still, they are suggestive of general levels of support for community production.

Typically, less than half of the subscribers in a given community are interested in access production, with anywhere from 5 to 15 per cent indicating high levels of interest. However, only about one in twenty respondents have actually participated in access productions, even in communities where production facilities have been relatively well funded and available for many years. Somewhat fewer are likely to have intentions to produce for access in any given year.

While these numbers sound small, they possibly indicate a need for substantial access production resources. For example, if 5 per cent of the adults in a system serving 100,000 homes (assuming 2 adults per home) wish to produce for access in a given year, and each production took an hour of studio time, then there would potentially be a need for five access studios, in use 40 hours per week to meet the demand. Looked at differently, this means one full-time studio for every 20,000 homes. Few cable systems in the United States meet this standard.

However, further questioning often reveals that the availability of production facilities has relatively little impact. The great majority of potential access users report that they have not actually become involved in production because they lack the personal time or motivation to do so. Few cite the lack of studios or inadequate equipment as barriers to participation. Lack of information about how to get involved is a much more important factor.

Many community productions also involve numerous people, with an average of nearly ten residents per production.

After taking these factors into account, it becomes apparent that the potential demand for the "typical" 100,000-home system might be met by a single studio, perhaps even operating on a part-time basis.

It is disturbing to note that in some communities the majority of those who wish to become involved in access productions are not themselves cable subscribers. This finding implies that some may, in a sense, be expecting a "free ride" and raises the question of how public access should be funded.

Most cable subscribers will agree that community programming should be supported out of their monthly cable bills — but only as long as no price is mentioned. Most subscribers start saying "no" to community programming when special fees of as little as 50 cents per month are mentioned. A sizable minority even say that they would disconnect cable altogether if such amounts were tacked on. Of course, there are some non-subscribers who might initiate subscriptions if better community programming were available. Usually the net result indicates that a substantial decrease in cable subscribership would result if additional fees were earmarked for community programs.

On the other side of the balance sheet, there is usually a sizable minority that is willing to make substantial monthly contributions (\$2.00 or more) to access production. Many potential access users also appear willing to pay fees of up to \$30.00 per half hour for studio time.

CONCLUSIONS

These results have important implications for the future of community programming. First, they demonstrate that community channels are indeed an important part of the cable programming mix. Viewership and viewer satisfaction levels compare favorably with many satellite-delivered channels. Results like these establish the bottom-line value of PEG channels for the cable operator. They should be worth at least as much as the basic channels they outperform, in some cases more than a dollar per subscriber per year in ongoing support. Many community programming operations appear to cost ten to a hundred times more than that. Cable operators and public officials will continue to question the cost/value relationship of community programming until more satisfied viewers are being delivered.

It is clear that community programming has a long way to go in living up to its

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Performance...

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potential. Community channels could be one of the most popular forms of cable programming. To date, that promise has not been fulfilled in terms of viewership and viewer satisfaction. More community resources will have to be expended to develop and promote community programs if they are to realize their potential.

The strategy of obtaining funding directly from cable operators — which is then passed through to subscribers in the form of higher monthly fees — will probably not work until the amounts requested are consistent with the value of the programming that results. This strategy forces the majority to pay for the video production interests of a very few — many of whom are not even subscribers themselves! In most communities, this policy can be demonstrated to be financially unsound and politically unpalatable. Support mechanisms such as community fundraising, PBS-style pledge drives, user fees and the earmarking of franchise fees are much easier to make a case for in the court of public opinion.

The results also suggest that it might be appropriate to redirect the thrust of resource allocation, particularly in the public access area. Resources should perhaps be directed away from developing facilities that will provide the widest possible access to the means of video production. Rather, the focus might be placed on improving the quality of a few productions, promoting what is produced more effectively and making the public better aware of what community programming dollars are buying. This strategy is likely to have the biggest impact on viewership and viewer satisfaction levels and, ultimately, on the level of support that community programming may command.

There is also a need to expand audience research for community programming. There is a high degree of variability in the performance of PEG channels between cable franchises. By making comparisons to national norms it is possible to identify where performance is above average and perhaps deserving of further funding, better promotion or more prominent channel placement.

Where performance is below standard, there is a need for qualitative research which will help producers better identify the needs of their audiences and to correct specific problems with their production and promotion strategies. Such research is

a vital component of the life cycle of commercial cable programming and it must also become part and parcel of community programming if it is to compete successfully for resources, channel space and audience.

In passing, community programmers have an additional burden of proof that commercial programmers do not. Many community programs are purposive in nature; that is, they intend to inform or influence their viewers in various ways. In the final analysis, their performance must also be judged by their ability to achieve the desired effects. This type of evidence is difficult — and costly — to develop, but

could go a long way toward justifying the extraordinary levels of investment that community programming sometimes requires.

CableMark Probe, a syndicated report on cable viewership and satisfaction, is a registered trademark of the ELRA Group. Data used in this article are with the permission of the ELRA Group.

Robert LaRose is an independent communications consultant based in San Francisco, California.

Marla Babakitis is a research manager with the ELRA Group.

Many Annenberg/CPB Series Now Available

By Bobbi L. Kamil and Denise Manning

The Annenberg/CPB Project was created in 1981 when the Annenberg School of Communications committed \$10 Million per year for fifteen years to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This commitment was made to support projects using telecommunications and information technologies to enhance the quality and availability of higher education.

One of the primary goals of the Annenberg/CPB Project is to develop course materials, tools and delivery systems to increase opportunities for individuals who wish to obtain college-level education, especially at the baccalaureate level. Courses have been developed in a variety of subject areas and are available to colleges and universities to use as complete courses for credit, or as supplementary materials in classrooms. Presently, more than 700 colleges use the video products as complete courses for credit for distant learners. The college pays a license fee and a small per-student fee.

The programs are delivered to students in a number of ways — many are on public television stations, some are carried on The Learning Channel, some are shown on local cable or colleges' closed circuit systems. Some colleges even make copies of the cassettes and loan them to students. Offering college credit using television makes it possible for many students to work on college degrees on a part-time basis.

But, the programs have a wider audience than just students who enroll in the courses for credit. There is a significant general audience potential. For example, the inner workings of Congress or the ways that economic principles affect our lives are both interesting to many viewers. Thus, the project has announced that many of the series will be available to cable systems as general audience material.

Each series listed below is available for a \$25.00 per year licensing fee. For that fee, a cable system acquires the rights to cablecast the programs as frequently as desired during that year. In an effort to make the programming available inexpensively, the Project has placed sets of 3/4-inch tapes at Pennsylvania State University. These tapes may be rented for copying purposes for \$6.50 per hour of programming (half-hour programs are recorded two to a tape).

The Learning Channel is offering another option for acquiring the programming. If the local cable system carries *TLC*, local access channels are invited to make copies of the Annenberg/CPB programs from that source. Again, the \$25.00 per year, per series charge applies.

The aim of these outreach activities by the Annenberg/CPB Project is multifold. First, to make quality programming available to local access channels at an affordable price. Second, to encourage more col-

Continued on Next Page

leges to offer credit for the courses. It is our hope that local cable access managers will contact the colleges in their area and encourage them to license the courses and make use of the cablecast schedule. Finally, colleges, businesses, industries, schools and libraries are encouraged to tape this programming off the air, pay a modest license fee, and use the materials for the life of the tapes in a variety of educational, training and community settings.

THE FOLLOWING COURSES ARE AVAILABLE:

Congress: We the People (26 30-minute programs) examines the historical development of Congress, its myriad organizations, procedures, privileges and powers; as well as the relationships between the House and Senate, and between Congress and the other branches of the Federal Government. Noted journalist Edwin Newman serves as moderator.

In 1987, the United States Constitution will be 200 years old. **The Constitution: That Delicate Balance** (13 one-hour programs) presents leading judges, scholars, lawyers, public officials and journalists as they debate hypothetical cases and examine how in the 20th Century our lives and destinies are intertwined with the document written two centuries ago.

The Write Course (30 30-minute programs) presents the best contemporary scholarship on the teaching of composition as a process. Its goal is to provide students with the expository writing skills they need to continue their college careers and to write effectively in most entry-level jobs for which college is the preparation.

The Mechanical Universe (26 30-minute programs) presents the basic ideas of physics, including the history of how they were discovered and the spirit and methods by which scientists operate. A full range of techniques to enhance learning—computer animation, experiments and demonstrations all help to convey the concepts of physics in an interesting and informative way.

The Mechanical Universe... And Beyond (26 30-minute programs) is the second semester of physics stressing electricity, magnetism, waves and optics, heat and thermodynamics, relativity and modern physics.

Economics USA (28 30-minute programs) is a comprehensive television course in macro- and micro-economics designed to address the sharply increasing demand for quality college economic

courses and general audience information in this critical field of study.

For further information on how to acquire Annenberg/CPB Project programming for use on your cable system, please contact:

Dr. Bobbi L. Kamil
Special Assistant for Academic Utilization
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Franchise Fees...

Continued from Page 25

as "general benefit" uses of the franchise fee obviously would be difficult to defend.

Alternatively, these state guidelines should permit franchise fee revenues to be used only for "purposes which directly benefit cable subscribers or advance PEG access goals." The subscriber benefits certainly would include local franchise regulation and cable consumer protection. The advancement of PEG access goals certainly would yield benefits to access producers, since it permits them to exercise their First Amendment rights through the cable medium. The advancement of these goals also yields direct benefit to the local public, since it permits members of the public to pursue their First Amendment right to a wide diversity of information sources. Accordingly, this guideline would emphasize the viewers' benefits, and counteract allegations that access amounts to little more than "vanity video."

Finally, state legislation should establish minimum standards for local franchise agreements, franchise regulation, consumer protection, and PEG access. Useful examples of such standards have already been established by some states. State adoption of minimum standards will provide a point of departure for studies of local needs and interests, and help to ensure that citizens in all communities will enjoy their Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection under the law.

SUMMARY

This article presents an argument in favor of state regulation of uses of cable franchise fee revenues, and proposes a state regulatory model with several major features. This approach could (a) break the existing impasse among the alternative perspectives on the purpose of the cable franchise fee and permissible uses of the revenues derived from them; (b) protect the rights of cable operators under the First Amendment; (c) protect the rights of individual citizens under the First and Fourteenth Amendments; and (d) increase dramatically the degree to which public access programming receives substantial and reliable monetary support. States could secure these benefits through any of several variations of, or enhancements to, this proposed model.

Local franchisors also would retain discretion in decisions to exceed the minimum standards established by their state government, establish local rules and

procedures for the use of PEG access channel capacity, and apportion franchise fee revenues among several permissible uses. These significant decisions should be made at the community level, because they involve the core issues of community-based PEG access.

If you agree that this approach should be considered at your state's legislature, send a copy of this article to your district representative and ask for his or her comments. When you receive a reply, please send a copy to the NFLCP Public Policy Committee, c/o Community Television Review.

Tom Karwin is a staff member of the University of California, Santa Cruz and publisher of California CableLetter.

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Management of Access...

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times will each piece have to be replaced during the life of the franchise?

3) How many access channels will be allocated to the nonprofit corporation? On what tier of cable service will they be placed? It is one thing to "have a channel," it is quite another to have a dedicated audio/video source to supply it and the control and monitoring equipment to operate it.

4) Who will be responsible for playback and for master control switching? How will the programming be delivered to the cable system headend?

5) Will existing leasehold improvements to buildings become the property of the nonprofit organization? What about the office equipment and furniture? Purchase of these items can drain thousands of dollars from a new access organization's budget.

6) How will the new organization be structured? Who will comprise its Board of Directors and membership? What provisions will be made to ensure diversity on the Board and a clear voice to and from the community producers and the community at large?

7) Will the access corporation be clearly held responsible for facilitating access, or will the cable company be the responsible party? What will be the role of the franchising authority in enforcing the provisions of the franchise and the access agreement?

The issues are the same, the players are the same. The difference is that we are forced to get down to the fundamentals: enforcing contracts, protecting our freedom of speech, and providing a communications system that will bring our communities closer together; in short, bringing to reality the promise of the wired city. The transfer of access management to nonprofit corporations places a tremendous amount of responsibility on our own shoulders. More than ever, the success or failure of community access depends on us.

Jan Sanders is an access producer and organizer in Dallas, Texas, and a member of the NFLCP Board of Directors.

Access and Change

Continued from Page 14

the council adopted a limited, 3-year trial work plan.

Several of the cities studied produced short but highly visible projects in their first year or so of operation. A common strategy was to involve department heads and city managers in early productions, thereby introducing decision-makers to the technology while improving the visibility of the cable TV department.

Trialability leads directly to observability. Once a cable TV department showed that television was not too difficult or expensive, that it was consistent with existing city priorities, and resulted in visible improvements in city services, they were a long way toward establishing a successful cable TV department. However, one factor overall resulted in growth and support of the department's operation: putting the City Council on cable television. Once the council members became visible to their constituents and received feedback from their performance on television, the viability of the cable TV department was assured.

Educational Access...

Continued from Page 17

much-needed revenue base, data transfer on cable for educational uses will flourish. If industry does not see the potential for cable and continues to use telephone lines and other traditional delivery systems, the prospects for education will be restricted.

CONCLUSIONS

Our survey was informal. We contacted areas we knew were actively involved in the use of educational access. They led us to other sources. We know that much more is going on. What we did find was consistent:

—Educators in large cities and small communities alike are using broadband cable to inform, instruct and communicate.

—Students are being exposed to a variety of instructional programs aimed at broadening their horizons and providing them with current information about the world they are growing into.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In summary, remembering that both people, and organizations, are usually reluctant to change can assist access managers in developing strategies for introducing or improving access operations. Begin by promoting the concept that access can help an individual, or organization, achieve their existing goals and objectives. Promote the access success stories of users that are perceived as important to the people you are trying to reach. De-mystify the technology so that users feel comfortable with the tools and the language of television. Start with easy, short, visible projects that can be accomplished without a lot of time or money. Finally, promote access programs to develop audiences, and measure your audiences to show to potential users that their efforts will result in the message reaching its intended viewers.

Speranza Avram is Senior Cable Coordinator with the Sacramento Metropolitan Cable Television Commission in Sacramento, California.

—Teachers have a resource that is flexible and exciting. They are throwing out old notions of "instructional television" and replacing them with concepts of live programming, teleconferencing and increased resources.

—Communities are gaining a better understanding of *their* schools. They are becoming more familiar with curriculum, administrators and local educational resources and problems. They will be better able to make informed, intelligent decisions when they go to the polls on election day to vote on school-related issues.

It's been slow. The promised panacea of cable that appeared in the late 70's and early 80's did not take hold at first. It has taken time, but the great potential of broadband cable in education is gaining momentum. We've only just begun!

Diana Braiden Radspinner is the Specialist in Cable Communications for the Dallas Independent School District in Texas.

Guidelines for Authors

Community Television Review is happy to receive articles, both solicited and unsolicited, from our readers. To assist both potential authors and the *CTR* staff, here is a list of submission guidelines to follow:

1) Each issue is dedicated to a particular theme, with several articles related to that theme. Here are the themes and approximate deadlines and publication dates for Volume 10:

Arts and Culture (Feb. 15; March 15)

Voices of Diversity (April 30; June 15)

Management and Fundraising (July 30; September 15)

High-Tech Access (October 30; December 15)

2) Most articles in *CTR* are 1,000 to 2,000 words long.

3) Good quality photographs, tables and graphics will greatly improve the appearance and clarity of your article. Provide caption information and photographer or artist's credit whenever possible. If you would like these materials returned to you, be sure to write your name and address on the back of each item.

4) Include a one-sentence biography of the author at the end of the article. Also, indicate whether we may print your address and phone number so that readers may contact you.

5) Articles may be sent as hard copy, but submission on floppy disk or via electronic mail is strongly encouraged:

—Hard copy manuscripts should be typed, double spaced. Corrections may be written in, provided they are clear and unambiguous. Send manuscripts to the address below.

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6) The address for submissions to *CTR* is:

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